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2587

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 By *Samuel C. Williams* Immigration Officer A 2  
 Remarks *Issued for one (1) year*

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PERMIT OF RESIDENCE

This certifies that the holder of this permit *Mr. Arthur S. Hagopian* having fully complied with the Act of Legislature entitled "An Act regulating the residence of Aliens and Immigrants within the Republic of Liberia" approved February 18 1928 and has satisfied the Bureau of Immigration of the Interior Department of his character, past or future occupation, and all other points required of him by the said Act, hereby granted this permit and to extend both in his person and property to the full period of the term of this Permit during his stay in Liberia granted by the permit or period of extension by the Government.  
 Said permit is valid for *one* year and subject to renewal from time to time.

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 (if unable to do so, see)



Name *Mr. Arthur S. Hagopian*  
 Nationality *American*  
 Born *Aug 31, 1902* at *New York*  
 Previous Nationality of any *Nil*  
 Profession or Occupation *Super. Construction*  
 Address in Liberia (Residence) *Hotel, Liberia*  
 Mode of arrival (if not ship) *by Air*  
 Passport or other Document as to Nationality and Identity *Passport*  
 In whose employ *Foresters Plantations Company*  
 Purpose of Occupation in Liberia *as a laborer*

Signature of holder of permit

Given under my hand and seal of office in the City of *Monrovia*  
 this *1* day of *January* A.D. 19 *42* at public  
 the Registry *Samuel Williams*  
*Samuel Williams*  
 Signature of *Immigration Officer*

Endorsements and Remarks



*Chief Aiku No 1, and  
"Chief Aiku No 2" the author*

***LIGHTING UP  
LIBERIA***

*By*

***ARTHUR I. HAYMAN AND  
HAROLD PREECE***



***CREATIVE AGE PRESS, INC.***

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ARTHUR INGRAM HAYMAN AND HAROLD PREECE

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To my mother, my most sincere critic; to the blessed memory of my father, and to Sylvia.

A. I. H.

To Celia, my wife, for her faith; to my parents, whose struggles are the struggles of all peoples.

H. P.



The names of my native friends who imparted the information contained in this book, are necessarily withheld, and fictitious names substituted.

*Arthur Ingram Hayman*

# A WORD TO THE READER

PEOPLE MAKE books as well as history. The real authors of this volume are Boatswain and Small Sam, Collins and Brown, Chief Arku, and those others who live what the co-authors of this book simply transcribe on paper. We are but "the talking-chiefs"—those given to record the mood and feeling of peoples at last awakening in this, the fourth year of the war for man's liberation.

I was indeed fortunate to secure Harold Preece as the co-author of this book. Mr. Preece shares with me a conviction that the new world must be built on the foundations of dignity and equality for all peoples. He is a southern white man by birth and has become widely known as a champion of the race to which we have assigned the lowliest positions—the black men and women whom we can no longer ignore

whether they live in Louisiana or Liberia. Mr. Preece has written widely, and is particularly known for his sympathetic studies of the great Negro folk culture.

I believe that this strong, essentially democratic culture is one of the great hopes for a universal civilization which will be based upon the contributions and the potentialities of the little man throughout the world. "The rich have power," as John Masefield puts it. But the poor have courage and neighborliness and a sense of values which transcend color or nationality. These qualities are particularly to be found in the Negro people. I have come in contact with Negroes, more in fact than I have with members of other races, as a result of the many years that I spent in Africa. The majority of my colored associates were the simple, willing bush people who have never been given a decent opportunity to better their positions. They want education and they want liberty. They cannot realize these two fundamental needs of all men because we, forgetting the ethics to which we pay a vague homage, have used our strength and our money to keep them as eternal vassals to successive empires.

I distinctly remember one principle that my father observed in his relationships with all men, whatever their color or status. He has been dead many years,

but I feel that his life was a successful one because he believed implicitly in the old commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." He was not a religious man in the formal sense of the word, yet in his literal manner he interpreted the precept as meaning, "Treat people the way you want to be treated." I may be guilty of oversimplifying the whole complex problem of international politics when I say that my father's principle is a pretty good pattern for the world unity which we hope will be the net end of this war. But the tribes of Liberia, who have no sleek ambassadors and no storm troopers, would understand what my father talked about. Given the chance, they will help build a social structure in West Africa, and build it exactly upon that sort of a foundation.

This I say because I know them and remember, with deep gratitude, their sincere hospitality and kindness toward me. There are many who believe that it is a sign of weakness to deal with so-called "primitive peoples" in any other terms but the lash and the gun. But those friends on my labor gangs worked harder for me because I treated them as men, and not as work-oxen. The men employed by one of the greatest monopolies in the world at a wage of ninepence a day knew that I personally would not hurt them,

and that I would try to better their conditions whenever I had the opportunity.

I know that the government of Liberia will not welcome me when I return to Africa. But the Liberian government is simply the cancer on the body of that unfortunate nation; the Buzzi, Bassa, and Dvai are the staunch heart which cannot be stopped by brutality and extortion.

Some day, after I have done my share in this war, and live, I will go back to Africa. No man who has ever fallen under the spell of its peoples can ever be but an alien and a stranger in any other part of the world. When I set foot on my adopted soil, I will be welcomed by my brother, Arku, as the duly chosen white chief of his tribe. The huts of the natives will be my huts. Their food will be my food, and everything that I have will also be theirs.

These friendships and these memories will warm me during those cold twilight years of my life, when memory draws a mantle of dreams over the face of time.

ARTHUR INGRAM HAYMAN.

## CHAPTER I

# PILGRIMS OF THE ' ' ELIZABETH ' '

LIEUTENANT STOCKTON knew that the bargain was clinched when the Dey chief looked greedily at the three pairs of shoes which found their way to this African slave coast from some abolitionist cobbler in Boston. His superiors of the American fleet had cautioned him to deal patiently with these black sovereigns who measured their wealth by traders' goods given them in exchange for the long lines of captives delivered monthly to the slave barracoons at Digby and Cape Blanco. "Remember the deal that the Dutch made with the Indians for Manhattan Island," a shrewd captain had told him. "Take your time lad, they'll ask for the moon and the whole American fleet to boot when you first sit down to palaver, but if you make a trade for this country, you'll make the Manhattan Island sale look small."

Stockton was glad that the days of negotiation were at an end as he wearily watched the headman try on a pair of shoes and tramp squeakingly over the hard dirt floor of the council house. Often he thought that it had been the hard driving energy of Ephraim Bacon sitting beside him, which had made him neglect his trim brig for weeks to talk in terms of trinkets and gewgaws to those haggling natives who let their rich land lie fallow while they raided villages for the legally outlawed slavers. Stockton was always uncomfortable—and always stirred—when Bacon told his mad dream of setting up a free Negro republic on this coast where a ballot box seemed as out of place as a woman aboard ship. Robert Stockton, hard-bitten sailor and commander of the U.S.S. "Alligator," felt the usual contempt that men of action have for men of books. He would have gruffly dismissed any world-saver but Ephraim Bacon, and, turned back to his duty of patrolling the turbulent waters of the Atlantic against the slave traders. A man, after all, felt on equal ground with the slavers—so many knots of mad chase when a cargo of black ivory was reported to be on its way across the sea, so many rounds of shot fired at the quarry, so many men killed on each side if the crew of the patrol boarded the enemy. But men like

Bacon never thought in terms as plain as two and two making an ordinary four—rather they started out figuring the impossible, and then made men like him grudgingly believe in that impossible. Here he was on that day, the sun so hot it drew the sap from the trees, trading in impossibles because this Pennsylvania preacher had looked at him, much as the traders appraised a scared Negro caught in the bush and said:

“I want your help.”

The Lieutenant drew out his handkerchief and wiped his brow. In an hour's time, after the usual handshakings and finger snappings, the trade would be finished and he could return to his cabin for the cool madeira which kept him from becoming as mad as Ephraim Bacon in this accursed country of fever, war, and misery. As the naval officer watched the headmen of the different tribes squat down in a corner of the house for a final inspection of the goods, he wished that Ephraim's brother, Samuel, had not died on his way to the colony. From what he had heard, Samuel would have slipped away from his sternly ascetic brother and joined him in a glass of his fresh wine which would be brought up by the Kru cabin boy. Samuel had been a fighting officer in the



Marines, a successful attorney, and altogether a sane man until he had finally taken enough time to listen to Ephraim. Then he had given up his practice, followed Ephraim into the Episcopal ministry, and set sail two years before for Liberia as its first administrator—appointed by the American Colonization Society. He had died before he ever reached the country which his brother had described as a promised land for the slaves who had been sold and worked like mules in a nation which, less than fifty years before, had revolted against the British king and proclaimed the rights of man.

The natives arose and faced the white men—Bacon, Stockton, J. B. Winn, and two or three others who made up the delegation.

“Our hearts be satisfied too much,” the paramount chief of the Deys spoke for the rest. “You must give we the same part soon-time. We take this part now and you give we the rest when we need it.”

Stockton knew that the headmen never expected to collect the second installment, and that they were, in effect, conveying their land for the pile of goods which lay in the hut. The natives must not lose face in any transaction with the white man; they must pretend

that they had outwitted him even if they took a promise never to be fulfilled as part payment.

"You have chosen well, great chiefs," Stockton answered. "May there always be peace between the black men of your tribes, and your brothers, the black men who have come across the big waters." Privately he thought: "One reason why they palavered so long is that they have a suspicion these emigrants will start their own slave business and drive the natives out of the country. Well, maybe they will, but that's none of my business. I've done this to accommodate Bacon."

At a signal, the black women who had been waiting outside came into the hut, and began carrying out the purchase goods. Later on, the chiefs would wrangle noisily over cane juice about the division of the goods—with most of the articles finally ending up in the storehouse of the tricky Dey chief. Stockton minutely checked each piece as it was carried out in order that the natives might not claim later they had been cheated. Every item called for in the agreement was there—six muskets, one small barrel of powder, six iron bars, two iron pots, one barrel of beads, two casks of tobacco, twelve knives, twelve forks, twelve spoons, a barrel of nails, a box of pipes, three looking-glasses, four umbrellas, three walking-sticks, one

box of soap, a barrel of rum (Stockton had assured Bacon that the unopened keg contained molasses), four hats, three pairs of shoes, and a few bolts of white calico.

Thus a settlement of thirty huts on Providence Island at the mouth of the Messurado River became a nation at an investment of third-rate merchandise which might have been bought for less than seventy-five dollars from any New England peddler. True, the fledgling little commonwealth would not be recognized as such until 1847, when several greater powers would begin carting their discredited politicians off to those remote shores—after conferring upon them the rank of consul. Its procession of elected rulers—men who valued the doubtful glory of a title more than the responsibility of fulfilling the hopes of Ephraim Bacon and the other ambitious founders—would not begin until the last white administrator, Thomas Buchanan, died in 1841. The death of Buchanan would mark the end of an epoch in Liberia, just as the retirement from the Presidency of the United States of Thomas' brother, James Buchanan—on the eve of the Civil War—marked the end of an age in the United States.

And even as the Federal army would be marching against the rebellious slaveholders down into the valley of Virginia, the American Colonization Society would be urging wholesale transportation of the slaves back to Africa as a better solution for the Negro question than this war of liberation which was being waged so fiercely by their old foes, the Abolitionists. In the years before the Civil War, they would be conducting their own bitter feud against the Abolitionists, with Liberia as the core of the battle. The Abolitionists would circulate stories of discontented Negroes who returned from the distant Utopia as proof that slaves must be freed in this country, and then integrated into American citizenship. And like a nervous midwife who fears for the life of the delicate infant which she has jerked into a dangerous world, the officers of the Colonization Society would take up the bludgeon for this new state—which would continue to be reinforced by American Negro settlers until early into the twentieth century. Garrison, Lovejoy, John Brown, and all the other towering figures of the Abolitionist movement would be branded as dangerous demagogues and fanatics by the Society which would choose as its presidents men of such impeccable social standing as Bushrod Washington and

Henry Clay. Even Lincoln would toy with the idea of colonization before his assassination, and before the beginning of that Reconstruction Era when poor white man and black man in the southern United States tasted briefly of freedom.

Once I heard an Americo-Liberian preacher declaim that "Ephraim Bacon had unloosed the winds of God" when he helped set up that first settlement of freed Negroes on Perseverance Island, which the traditionally religious colonists of 1820 were to rename Providence Island. The preacher, in this display of metaphor, was, of course, limiting God's bounty to that little clique of twelve thousand which rules two millions of other black men in the bush with an iron hand not less galling than the shackles imposed by the southern slave owners upon their fathers. But those lately freed pilgrims of the schooner "Elizabeth," must have felt the winds of God blow across their faces on that day in 1820 when they knelt in a prayer of deliverance on Providence Island, the long journey from America having been completed, and the memories of slavery now yielding to the prospect of manhood here in this continent which had been the old, never-forgotten mother of their race.

And as the Pilgrims of the "Mayflower" were sus-

tained through that first winter of disease and hunger by their deep religious convictions, so the eighty who had landed from the "Elizabeth" felt that an all-seeing Deity was guiding them through fever and constant threat of attack from the hostile native tribes, toward a new life. One of their own color, Elijah Johnson, a free Negro from New York, had supervised the little community until the second administrator, Rev. Jehudi Ashmun, had been sent out by the Society to succeed Bacon. Intensely religious, Johnson compared the building of Liberia to the building of Jerusalem by the ancient Hebrews. He was severe, however, with those who thought that they had already reached heaven when they came to Liberia, and that the sole purpose of their migration had been to get out of work which they had known as slaves.

When Ashmun arrived in August, 1822, he, too, faced the problem of the drones who felt that they should be entitled to supplies from the colony storehouse whether or not they worked for their subsistence. Like Captain John Smith in the early Virginia colony, he laid down the simple but effective rule that "he who does not work shall not eat." There had been twenty-four deaths from malaria and dysentery during the temporary administration of Johnson, and at

least half of the survivors were weakened from those twin plagues of West Africa. But Ashmun decreed that every person, in the least able to work, should devote four hours a day to communal work in return for food and clothing. Those who obstinately refused to do their share could go hungry. Samuel Wilkinson, an early agent of the Colonization Society, said in a report, "The Progress and Condition of Liberia in 1839," that "there are many substantiating facts about unrest and poor backing from pioneers themselves given to Rev. Ashmun who really showed unusual fortitude and extraordinary good sense in his handling of the Society's business."

It was the firmness of Ashmun which saved that original colony on the island, and which resulted in the building of the second settlement, later to be called Monrovia after President James Monroe of the United States. The settlers moved to the new community, directly across the river from their former homes, built the town whose main street is called Ashmun, and for the first time, since they had landed on African soil, began living in more or less normal fashion. In the years that followed, as Americo-Liberians multiplied and pushed inland, they built other towns or preëmpted those already occupied by

natives—places which, after almost a century, are still straggling settlements: Kakata, Salala, Buchanan, Marshall, and others. At various times, counties were set up as subsidiary units of the central government in Monrovia. By 1830, the colonists numbered fifteen hundred persons who had already formed themselves into a little aristocracy, aloof and apart from the natives whom they met only as customers in their shops or as laborers on their farms. Perhaps this was the fault of the Society in not attempting to improve the conditions of all Negroes—immigrant and native—in its sphere. Possibly the Society felt that it had enough on its hands in caring for the immigrants without attempting to interfere with the social and political life of the tribes. Its sponsors may have hoped vaguely that the Liberian commonwealth would some day become a black democracy of all black people within its borders; in fact, it was always issuing furious denials to the accusations of the Abolitionists that it did not concern itself with the natives. Possibly by being too paternalistic toward its wards, it preserved too deep a distinction between those transplanted black men who spoke English and those native black men who spoke their own dialects.

Whatever speculations one may want to indulge in



about the past, less than ten years had elapsed before a group of men and women, once slaves, or the children of slaves, had become a solid little ruling class with all the traditional psychology and the traditional needs—including an army—of a ruling class. In 1830, the Liberians defeated the Krus and Greboes, who had joined forces against the now hated colonists in the first of several wars. They were to defeat these same people again in 1846, and thus further cement their rule over all those tribes who hate them today in a sullen, restless fury which may assert itself in this period of the Second World War with all the sudden fury of an African storm. In the minds of the natives, the Americo-Liberians became synonymous with the whites as mortal enemies who ravaged villages and enslaved a man's kin.

In 1847, when the slave states of the mother country had provoked the Mexican War to obtain territory for slave cultivation, the daughter country had become an independent republic with a Declaration of Independence modeled in grandiose style after the document penned by Thomas Jefferson. The Krus and Greboes and twenty-eight other tribes in Liberia's forty-three thousand square miles knew neither of Monrovia's Declaration of Independence nor of the

war being fought some five thousand miles overseas. They were sitting in anxious councils wondering how they could maintain their personal freedom, as well as their farm lands, against the new masters with black skins, who, under the very noses of the Colonization Society's representatives, had turned secretly to the white man's occupation of trading slaves.

## CHAPTER II

# GOVERNMENT IN BLUE

"Mr. Brownell's delusions were of short duration however. He early returned to Liberia, denounced the mischievousness of Mr. Morais, and settled down to repair whatever damage his temporary political insanity has caused. He now occupies the position of judge of the Circuit Court.—" *Walter F. Walker, Liberian Consul General in the United States and former Secretary of Public Instruction, in the Crisis (New York), November, 1934.*

HIS EXCELLENCY, the President, wiped the perspiration from his heavy jowls, carefully folded the wide, silk handkerchief, and replaced it in his pocket. Crossly, he told the native boys carrying his hammock to slow their pace and to stop singing the monotonous Grebo chant which particularly annoyed His Excellency on this hot afternoon in the bush. Anything remotely connected with the Greboes was like

the persistent sting of a mosquito to President Barclay, as the caravan headed toward a village where the town chief and his people would soon be made to realize that Liberia's duly-chosen ruler still ran things in this country.

The Grebo, Brownell, had been easy to handle. Of course, it was an open secret among Monrovia's officialdom that this seedy lawyer with the shiny frock coat would never again dare to visit his own tribe without just such an armed escort as protected President Barclay on this unexpected journey. The President, like the henchmen of his Cabinet, held the Grebo in contempt socially even when they condescended to drink imported whiskey with him at the levees in the Executive Mansion. However neatly Brownell wore the garb of civilization, His Excellency and the courtiers could never forget that Brownell's first garb had been a piece of country cloth. However dainty the new Judge's table manners, the members of the administration were painfully aware that their colleague had once dug into the country chop, out of a common bowl, with these same fingers that now sported gold rings.

But, irritated as he was with the Greboes, in general, His Excellency admired Brownell as much as he

could respect any native. As skillfully as any Americo-Liberian born to politics, Brownell had known how to advance his own fortunes. When the Grebo had been snubbed by the men who schemed and maneuvered for jobs and cash, Brownell had called attention to himself in a rather dramatic fashion. He had joined the Peoples' Party which naïvely believed that some day it could triumph over bribery and ballot stuffing, and oust President Barclay's True Whig Party from the control of the government. He and that other Grebo, F. W. M. Morais, had accepted traveling expenses jointly from the Grebo chiefs and the heads of the Peoples' Party, to lay the case of the Liberian natives before the League of Nations in Geneva. Brownell had played his trump card—and won. Within a few months, he had returned from Geneva a changed man and a staunch supporter of the administration.

It was possibly only a coincidence that the Grebo had been given his appointment as a circuit judge after he had returned to his native country, and that the reluctant doors of the Executive Mansion at last swung open to him. President Barclay, the dignified head of a sovereign state, would to this day deny the story that Brownell was approached and made to see

reason by the then Liberian delegate to the League of Nations. Several years later Brownell was to be made Attorney-General in the President's Cabinet—if only to refute charges, made in circles abroad, that natives, whatever their abilities, had no opportunity to rise in Barclay's country.

But the President was not thinking of Brownell as cabinet material on that afternoon as the distant echo of drums from the village indicated that his party had been sighted by the townspeople. He dismissed the fawning Brownell from his mind and began thinking of that other Grebo, Morais, who could neither be bribed nor browbeaten. The meddling of his irreconcilable foe had forced him to leave his comfortable mansion and make this hot, undignified journey into the bush. Usually, raiding expeditions were left to the District Commissioners appointed by His Excellency, and officially, at any rate, the President knew nothing of the extortions practiced upon the simple people of the villages. The President swore at the native who walked beside him with a heavy palm-leaf fan, and began thinking about ways of silencing the obstinate Morais.

His Excellency had hated the man when he took his seat as an Opposition member of the House of Representatives, and began to make speeches full of such

high-sounding phrases as "the rights of man" and "mistreatment of the natives." In his conversations, public and private, the fluent Grebo was continually quoting from a writer of books, evidently a Frenchman, by the name of Rousseau. Morais had read too much, the President grumbled to himself, in those years when he had lived on the French Gold Coast before returning to Liberia. What man with common sense wasted his time reading books which turned him into an "anarchist" and "agitator"—those two words had a special savor for the President since they could be used to discredit anybody who went tale-bearing to the powers in Geneva and Washington.

Morais' service in the national legislature had been somewhat limited. His Excellency chuckled when he remembered what had happened. All of the legislation to be passed at that session had already been decided at private conferences between the President and the True Whig members in the Executive Mansion. Morais had, however, insisted that his colleagues vote upon his bills for the relief of the natives. The Grebo knew that his measures would be defeated if they ever came up for a vote—but their very defeat would give him another point of argument before that interna-

tional tribunal of the League which Liberia had joined only in the hopes of getting a handout. There was only one way to deal with such an incorrigible rebel, and that was the way undertaken by the President's hand-picked majority in the house. A resolution was introduced by a party wheelhorse declaring that Representative F. W. N. Morais had committed treason by his unpatriotic criticism of the President. Therefore, his seat was declared vacant and a new election ordered in his county.

After this drastic treatment, the President had expected Morais to come on his knees begging for pardon and a job. The President had meant to publish his enemy's recantation to the League, and then put that enemy in some obscure position where he could cause no further trouble. But the obstinate Morais had immediately announced himself as a candidate for Vice President on the Peoples' Party ticket, causing the True Whigs to draw heavily upon the national treasury to prevent such a public catastrophe as the election of a native to the second highest office in the republic.

President Barclay, running for his first elective term in that year of 1931, had faced the stiffest opposition encountered by any candidate of the True



Whigs during the fifty-year period which that party of the government had presided over the chaotic destinies of Liberia. Since one must be a property-owner to vote in Liberia, his Secretary of the Treasury had worked frantically for days, issuing bogus titles on land to native plantation hands and house servants who could be rounded up and brought in gangs to the polls. These titles had been duly delivered to the administration-appointed election commissioners—who were also instructed to find flaws in the deeds of the Peoples' Party supporters and thus disqualify them from exercising their franchise.

As a final precaution, Monrovia's one printer had been instructed to print only a limited number of the red ballots, used by the Peoples' Party, and an unlimited supply of the blue slips handed out by the True Whigs to electors. But even with the coöperation of the printer, the President knew that one could not be too sure of victory over these "anarchists." Under the law, the ballots of either color had to contain the names of the candidates of each party. Natives, inflamed by the propaganda of Morais and his supporters among the Grebo chiefs, might conceivably take blue ballots and still vote to place this particular Grebo, with Thomas J. Faulkner, his Americo-

Liberian running mate for President, in control of national affairs. To make matters worse, a number of the younger Americo-Liberians had listened to the subversive speeches of Morais, and would undoubtedly scratch the party of their fathers in that final test at the polls.

Naturally, the President had remained in dignified retirement on that day when sovereign Liberia—or a fractional proportion of it—had held its national election. But from messengers who came to him hourly, he kept his finger on the final pulse. At the end of the day, when returns indicated that the True Whigs had again won by a huge majority, he admitted that his henchmen had done a magnificent job.

Never in its history had Liberia seen such a drunken orgy as that day when the immaculately respectable and deeply pious Mr. Barclay was being returned to office. It is a truism that practically everybody dines, dances, and drinks on election day, but Monrovia was still feeling its collective hangover three days after the votes had been counted by the truest of the True Whigs.

Across the street from each polling place, the supporters of President Barclay erected sheds with long tables groaning under the weight of country chop and

cane juice. Natives were rounded up from the streets and brought in droves by their Americo-Liberian masters. After they had crammed their gullets with the heavy food and the strong, heavy liquor, party workers carried them in rickety cars from one precinct to the other. The natives were handed blue ballots, already marked with the names of the True Whig candidates. They deposited these in the boxes, shouting and shrieking as they went from one polling place to the other, winding up in one or another of the sheds, calling for more chop and more cane juice.

Tom Faulkner went from one precinct to the other, challenging votes and swearing out warrants against True Whigs brazenly engaged in ballot-stuffing. The election judges laughed in his face; the court judges refused to accept his warrants. The three hundred Liberian soldiers, always stationed in the capital, massed in front of the polling places with their guns cocked, threatening to massacre the members of the Peoples' Party if, through some accident, it happened to win the election. Peoples' Party workers were shoved around by both the soldiers and the police who placed several of them under arrest for "disorderly conduct."

That night the President relaxed in his mansion as

the drums began to roar out across the dirty, littered streets of Monrovia. From the top floor of his mansion, he watched half-naked men and women dance, twist, and sing in the streets. Swift runners meanwhile brought him the returns from the outlying counties of the Republic—returns which indicated mounting majorities for the True Whigs.

"I guess that will fix Morais," he mused, as he turned his back to the orgy and walked down the stairs.

But Morais should have been meted out drastic treatment before he became such a formidable leader, the President was thinking regretfully as the caravan came within sight of the palm-thatched Grebo village. Morais had remained in Europe after the desertion of Brownell, making one trip after another from Geneva to London, bending shocked ears, and pouring into them the tale of Liberia's woes. And now Geneva had sent out not the cash which the President had expected, but a League representative, Dr. Mackenzie, with a "Liberian Plan of Assistance" to be executed after Mackenzie had made an official investigation of conditions in the country. The report of the investigation had been decidedly unfavorable to the administration,

and the faction led by Morais was demanding enactment of the plan.

President Barclay had drawn fifteen hundred dollars out of Liberia's always half-empty treasury, had the Secretary of the Treasury charge the sum to "traveling expense," and headed south with a squad of fifty soldiers into the Grebo country south of Monrovia. The President had taken no chances, as he and his wife bundled into hammocks for the slow journey. Besides the soldiers, he was accompanied by eighty porters who, if necessary, would constitute a reserve force, and who would carry the tribute levied from the villages en route.

Not far away, at the town of Hoffman Station near Cape Palmas, his enemy, Morais, was awaiting the coming of Dr. Mackenzie, waiting to present Mackenzie to the Grebo chiefs, and to help explain to them the plan which would provide education for the Grebo children and roads over which the Greboes could bring their produce to market. But, for the present, he could not touch Morais. When the rebel had returned from Geneva, Barclay had ordered him confined for fifteen years, along with seven other men, in the military concentration camp at Belleyellah far up in the cannibal country of the Golas. But educated chiefs

had then cabled a protest to the International Society for the Defense of Native Peoples in Geneva. The Society had reported the case to the League, which had wired Monrovia that Liberia could expect no financial assistance unless she released all of her political prisoners. The release order, signed by the President, came too late for four of Morais' fellow-prisoners. They had already died of exposure and malnutrition, after being confined in a prison which antedated Hitler's system of concentration camps by several years.

When the caravan entered the village, the town chief and other chiefs who had been summoned for a conference bowed low before the President. His Excellency wasted no time on the formalities of politeness. "Go into the council house," he said curtly to the chiefs. "I have something to say to you."

Flanked by a bodyguard on each side, the President laid down the law to his disobedient vassals. "I am directing this country, not the League of Nations or its advisor," he spoke through his interpreter, since the head of the nation must not honor the vulgar dialects of the tribe by using them in official conversation. "If any of you talk any more about this plan, or speak to the new chief advisor who is coming, I will wipe out the villages of the Grebo. If you continue

longer to disobey your District Commissioner and continue to obey Morais, I will depose every headman of the Grebo and send him to Belleyellah. I have spoken." Then the President turned on his heel and walked out of the house, followed by his guards.

Then, to teach the restless Grebo a truly lasting lesson, the soldiers began entering the huts, beating and abusing their occupants, picking up the few miserable possessions and stowing them in their knapsacks. His Excellency looked on without comment—the loyalty of an army was maintained by giving it a certain license, particularly when some illiterate beggars needed to be shown their place. That night, at supper, the soldiers gorged themselves on all the food in the village, until not a grain of rice or a drop of palm oil was left for any resident of the town. When the expedition left the next morning, it was increased by several natives conscripted to serve as additional bearers for the "presents" His Excellency was accumulating on the tour. And by the time that the trip was concluded, the President's expedition required one hundred and fifty bearers to carry all the gold, cloth, ivory, goats, chickens, and everything else which might be given to appease the wrath of the chief executive and his fierce, loot-crazed troops.

That trail of plunder is still marked deeply on the minds of the Grebo. Their chiefs, knowing of my sympathy for the native peoples, told me about it with hatred in their voices and with the stubborn, unspoken determination to some day avenge this aching wrong. While His Excellency did not visit personally every Grebo village to give his grim warning of silence, his representatives saw personally that not one village was left unscathed by the presidential wrath.

At another village on Cape Palmas, members of the Frontier Force arrested the Grebo chief, Kedo Do, and an educated tribesman, Henry Merriam. Both men were friends of Morais and had been outspoken in their support of the League Plan. After the men had been tortured and abused to the point of exhaustion, they were fined twenty pounds each. Three months later, with the League representative expected momentarily, the two men were again arrested and sent as prisoners to the dismal Baawudobo prison.

King Sie Wea, an aged man and one of the most respected of the Grebo chiefs, and a Negro physician, Dr. J. K. Wilson, who had also supported the Peoples' Party, were brought before Barclay at Cape Palmas and sentenced by His Excellency, without the formality of a trial, to fifteen years in Belleyellah.



Then the President dispatched another force to arrest Chief Wede Uma, Ko Jabla—his talking chief—Gbawa Hamie, and Nyabo. After those four leaders had been ordered confined in Baawudobo, Barclay turned in a rage and swore to the sullen natives:

“No chief advisor is going to run Liberia. I will do everything I can to prevent such encroachments, or die in the attempt.”

Barclay then went on to Sasstown to demand the surrender of one of the most courageous of the Liberian oppositionists, Chief John Nimley, whose district had violently resisted detachments of the Liberian frontier force. When the official party entered Sasstown, Nimley strode forward erectly and boldly. “Give yourself up and accept military occupation of your territory, or my soldiers will kill every man, woman, and child in Sasstown.”

Nimley was as honest as he was shrewd. He had believed Mackenzie when the Scotchman told him that the Plan of Assistance meant better days for the Greboes, and he had spent long hours talking with Morais about the details of the plan. Now, he took Barclay at his word. It would be useless, Nimley reasoned, for his poorly equipped warriors to engage in an open battle with these heavily armed fighters commanded

by the President himself. If Barclay should be killed in the battle, it would mean that the Greboes would be accused before the League of murdering Liberia's ruler. Nimley made a show of complying with the President's orders. In a short time, he was at liberty, leading his guerilla band in flank attacks against scattered detachments of the government forces.

But His Excellency reserved the harshest fate for the people of Fishtown who had treasonably demanded the return of seventy-nine pounds paid to one of the President's political allies, Henry Cooper, for making a fraudulent survey of their land. Dr. Mackenzie had declared, in his report to the League, that Cooper had been responsible for the war between Fishtown and a neighboring village, a war resulting from disputes over boundaries marked out in the survey. A total of twenty-eight people had been killed on both sides before the elders of the two villages had conferred together, and decided to place the blame where it belonged—on the Americo-Liberian politician, Cooper.

Because its headmen had talked with the League representative, Fishtown, with all of its land, was ordered forfeited to the government. Barclay then decreed that twenty-eight Fishtown men were to be shot

as punishment for the killing of the twenty-eight who had already lost their lives. Henry Cooper was still living well off the natives when I last saw him in Liberia. If he had any consciousness of blood on his head, he failed to show it.

With the back of the Grebo opposition having been broken, President Barclay congratulated himself that he had taken decisive steps to preserve the integrity of the country. He still makes occasional forays out into the bush, heavily guarded, of course, to see that the chiefs collect the taxes; that the District Commissioners in return remit something of the loot which they extort from the natives to supplement their seldom-paid salaries of eight hundred dollars per year. But most of the time he sits in the Executive Mansion on Ashmun Street, helping to compose elaborate messages of state that foreign departments of other nations swear are masterpieces of high-flown double talk, and which seldom commit the Liberian national administration to anything.

Without maligning him as a person—because he is in some respects pitiable—he is the prize symbol of a regime which is both a whining mendicant and the most relentless oppressor of the cramped, narrow

little governments of the earth. Without questioning his personal rectitude, he is a product of an aristocracy which produces politicians but not statesmen, lawyers but not technicians. That aristocracy, of course, cannot have the spirit of *noblesse oblige* which older and wealthier aristocracies develop as a rational defense against hungry bellies in huts and cabins.

But, until its members learn honesty and how to work, that aristocracy will continue to produce such outstanding representatives as the Postmaster-General who forged a check and served a term in Sing Sing, after he had been sent to the United States for education. It will continue to breed such picaresque rogues as the Vice President who stole the account books of a creditor to whom he owed eight hundred dollars, throwing the books in the river, and then denying the debt. When it is seriously threatened from rumblings down below, it will use more drastic measures to preserve that peculiar process which the American Negro author, George Schuyler, has described under the general term, "Monrovia Mooches On." Morais was expelled from the national legislature for treason. Another opposition deputy, however, was found dead in the bush with the flies swarming over his body.

And the smug hostility of that aristocracy to progress will always find expression in men like His Excellency, managing to keep the leaky ship of state afloat by beating the country's bills, and locking up the country's liberals. His Excellency felt that he had done himself well back in 1933 when he declared a moratorium against all the pesky international bill collectors, and at the same time had filled up the concentration camps.

"—it is worthy of note that in many aspects the despondency and acute crisis of the past few years have given place to a spirit of hopefulness for the future," His Excellency said in his message to the legislature that year.

"The new spirit is largely the result of the law to suppress agitation and the law for the moratorium. Both these measures had important reactions and were criticized; but as to the first, no government can supinely permit itself and its work to be obstructed and nullified, by anarchistic groups in the pay of foreign governments."

## CHAPTER III

# ‘THE WHIP IS OUR PAY’

“There shall be no slavery within this Republic; nor shall any citizen of this Republic or any person therein deal in slaves either within or without this Republic, directly, or indirectly.”—*Constitution of Liberia, Article I, Section I.*

“Every work they give us to do, the whip is our pay. In our country, we are there as slaves.— Our own rice they put on our backs and call it government loads.— We work to give them chop.”—*Native witness before League of Nations Commission of Inquiry at Kakata, 1928.*

LIBERIA IS the only nation calling itself a Republic holding human beings in slavery. It is also the only republic whose elected heads were forced by the outraged opinion of the world to resign, because those very heads were the spearheads of the foul traffic in men. And, with diabolical irony, the slave traders themselves are the descendants of slaves rescued

from bondage by philanthropic Americans. Their ancestors were saved from being murdered in cold blood by an ancestor-king of the very people sold into slavery. The contradiction becomes a tragedy when one remembers that most of these man-catchers combine the vocation of politics and "blackbirding" with still a third occupation—preaching the Gospel. They have been simultaneously the men who made the laws in the national legislature, the men who kept the slave compounds to which thousands of bound and bleeding natives were unwillingly carried before being shipped to the Spanish plantations at Fernando Po, and the men who, on Sunday, delivered sizzling sermons reeking with hellfire and brimstone.

But never once have I heard one Liberian preacher-politician speak on that simple phrase of Christ, in which the Palestine carpenter declared that his mission was to "bring deliverance to the captives" and "to them that sit in bondage." Words like that might put false ideas in the heads of "ignorant" Liberian natives, as they did in the heads of "ignorant" slaves in that period which produced those moving songs of protest which we know as "spirituals." Liberia's Christianity, like Liberia's democracy, is purely formal. Monrovia's Sundays are full of holiness—in the

narrow sense—with most of the Americo-Liberian population turning out to church. And as if to complete that tragic cycle of the Cross and the Chains, the slave-herding soldiers and officers stationed in the capital attend services as a part of their military discipline.

Slave trading in Liberia is, of course, much more covert than it was in the days before the “blackbird ring,” headed by Postmaster General Samuel A. Ross, Vice President Allen L. Yancey, and President Charles Dunbar Burgess King, was exposed in its infamy by the League Commission. Native tribes today are still required to furnish their quota of unpaid laborers for the roads in the Americo-Liberian districts of the five counties. Otherwise, the psalm-singing, gun-carrying soldiers will impose heavy fines upon the reluctant villages, tear down the thatched houses, and then drag the men forcibly from the bush to the roads where they are required to furnish their own food. The pawn system, whereby natives are forced to mortgage their own children to pay taxes or fines, still flourishes back in the hinterland. There it is not likely to meet the eye of any prowling foreigner.

Gangs of agricultural workers, also dragged from their homes by soldiers, are—in this period of war—



more often sent to remote plantations owned by Liberians in the up-country than to nearby colonies of France, Spain, or Portugal. To give the whole system a semblance of legality within the Liberian Constitution, the natives are first assessed heavy fines for trivial or imaginary offenses, then required to work an indefinite time to pay the extortionate sums. The procedure is almost the same as that followed in some of our southern states where people are forced on chain gangs to pay the penalty due the law or else are rented out to some private contractor who receives the labor of the "guilty" individual in return for payment of his fine.

And still, from Monrovia to the border of French West Africa, the people of the bush sing their protests against slavery—sing songs like this one about former Vice President Yancey, the upstanding, righteous lawmaker who made a huge fortune by sending kidnaped laborers to Fernando Po.

### SAD SONG OF WEDABO WOMEN

*We were here when trouble came to our people  
For this trouble Jeh was imprisoned and fined  
For this reason Yancey came to our country—  
He caught our husbands and our brothers,*

*Sail them to 'Nana Poo*  
*And there they die!*  
*And there they die!*  
*Tell us why?*  
*Yancey, why?*  
*Yancey, why?*  
*Wedabo women have no husbands,*  
*Yancey, why?*  
*Wedabo women have no brothers,*  
*Yancey, why?*  
*Mothers, brothers, sons have died,*  
*Waiting for the return,*  
*Yancey, why?*

A man who never neglected his own interests, Mr. Yancey also forced people into servitude on the farms which he owned privately with his wife—his main legal advisor during that period being none other than the probable next President of the Republic, Supreme Court Justice W. V. S. Tubman. Justice Tubman at that time was a senator in the national legislature. In the song the people tell of the treatment inflicted upon the brave Wedabo chief, Jeh, head of a small tribe which defied Yancey in his demand for laborers to be shipped to Fernando Po. The song was

recorded on a small machine in the possession of a League of Nations investigator, and it asks questions which are still unanswered by Liberia's officials.

Justice Tubman, of the nation's highest court, probably feels the prickles of uneasy memory when he hears that song about his old friend and client, the Honorable Allen N. Yancey. But in the Americo-Liberian tradition, Justice Tubman will probably never think of refunding to the Wedabo the more than one hundred pounds paid to him by the Chief, for legal services never rendered.

During those days, with a coöperation that was really touching in that money-mad fraternity of the Americo-Liberians, Yancey, then the official superintendent of Monrovia County, conducted his own end of the partnership by stirring up ancient feuds between the tribes—such as one of long standing between the Wedabo and the Poo River People. Yancey would advise one of the factions to hire an attorney—who invariably proved to be Senator Tubman. Yancey would collect the fee for Tubman, as well as sizable sums for himself. After the litigation, able-bodied members of each enemy tribe would find themselves locked up in Yancey's compound, awaiting either transportation

to Fernando Po or to one of the several Yancey plantations.

Chief Jeh had been home in his village of Sokolen when some of his tribesmen killed three of the Poo River People in a fishing dispute. The fight started after Yancey had urged the Wedaboes to settle by bloodshed their century-old quarrel with the Poo River tribe, a branch of the Krus. Hearing of the battle, Kru Coast District Commissioner Frank Harris had members of the Frontier Force raid all the villages of the Wedabo, and seize their leaders—sixty all told. The men were taken to a road, stripped of all their clothing, and flogged with sharp, wiry reeds.

The chiefs were still nursing their wounds, when Yancey, as superintendent of Maryland County, summoned Chief Jeh before him. The Americo-Liberian politician, professing great indignation and great sympathy, advised the chief to sue Harris for damages, and suggested three attorneys—headed by Tubman—to handle the case. When Yancey said that he would need three hundred pounds to prosecute the case, Chief Jeh, a poor man, had the greatest difficulty in raising the money.

When the case came to court, the chief learned that

he was the man who was technically on trial. The judge failed to call Harris even to answer the complaint, and the proceedings did not last five minutes. When the chief and his retainers entered the door, Tubman told him: "All right, the case is finished and the court says you are free." The court, Yancey, and Tubman then proceeded to divide Jeh's money, with Senator Tubman receiving one hundred and forty pounds.

One year later, Jeh was still trying to pay the debt charged against him by Yancey, when he and two other chiefs were summoned before President King in Monrovia. On that occasion, according to what relatives of Jeh told me, Yancey stirred up the Poo River People rather than the Wedaboes. He persuaded the villagers of the Poo to send a delegation to King to complain of the Wedaboes, and demand punishment of those who had killed the three men in the fight. King, like his successor, Barclay, was not a man to waste time on natives.

"Your tribe has committed an offense against the peace and dignity of the state," he declared pompously. "The Wedaboes are fined three hundred pounds. You and the other two chiefs will be held in jail here in Monrovia until the money is paid, or the

murderers of the Poo River People are produced. Twenty, forty years may pass, but you will be locked up until the Wedaboes atone for their crime.”

The Wedaboes were in a panic when native messengers informed them that their three leading men had been imprisoned without so much as a trial, and for an indefinite term. That was the climax for which Yancey was waiting—after he had spoken to the headmen of the Poo River People. He came to the subchiefs of the Wedabo, and offered to advance the money for the fine providing that the tribe would furnish him five hundred men for Fernando Po.

The Wedaboes had no alternative except to accept the hard bargain driven by Yancey. When the time came for them to fulfill their part of the agreement, they hid in the bush. No native wants to be bound over to the plantations of Fernando Po for two years, possibly to die there from malaria or from one of the other dread diseases which destroy life wholesale in the filthy, unsanitary labor barracks of the island. But Yancey was not to be cheated of his flesh. The natives bade tearful farewell to their people, and set out in the slave-boats for Fernando Po—after Yancey had threatened to burn their villages if they continued to absent themselves in the bush.

At that time, Yancey was acting as labor agent at Cape Palmas for Samuel Ross, head of the Liberian slave ring, chief political fixer for the True Whig Party, and the power behind the throne. Edwin Barclay, who is now President, was Secretary of State, then acting with his uncle, Arthur Barclay, a former President, as attorneys for the Spanish agricultural syndicate which secured laborers from the ring. Barclay, as head of the State Department, issued official clearances for the vessels which carried natives down the coast to the island.

It was only after the League of Nations had turned the spotlight on King and Yancey, that Barclay began to pose as a champion of liberation for the natives. After all, as Secretary of State, he would automatically move into the Executive Mansion if both the President and Vice President were forced out of office.

Had Barclay actually meant to excise the cancer of slavery from Liberia, he would have made a clean sweep once he had assumed authority. He would have swept out the parasitic ruling clique, and placed in office men like Roland Faulkner, a beloved figure to the natives. But nothing was changed in that "palace revolution," but the face in the executive mansion.

The swarming bribe-hungry little customs collectors, the lawyers who would be expelled from any court of reputable jurisprudence, the pompous preacher-politicians who never learned the equalitarian concepts of the great religions—all of these continued to levy tribute from the public treasury and from the villages of the bush, taking the last dollar or the last chicken to maintain their personal standing in a hide-bound little society which mortgaged the very flesh of men and women. These same slaves, unlike the ancestors of that caste, had no redeemers.

As a True Whig leader, Barclay had been an accessory to one of the most infamous political deals ever recorded in the history of this republic. Side by side with him in the Cabinet sat the newly appointed Samuel Ross, key-man of the Liberian slave ring, and Vice President Allen L. Yancey. Sammy Ross, as he is known to Liberia, had executed the smartest coup of his career when he commanded his satellite, King, to make some necessary changes in the law which would insure the continued flow of forced labor to Fernando Po.

Quite accidentally an honest man, Reginald A. Sherman, had been the predecessor of the ubiquitous



Sammy as head of the Post Office Department. Sherman, while visiting outlying postoffices, dropped into Sammy's home town of Greenville, and there saw the Ross Slave compound with its scores of poor wretches awaiting exile from their country. Sherman immediately swore out a complaint in the Sinoe County court against Ross and Ross' principal slave-catcher, Ed Blackett, quartermaster to District Commissioner Watson, who, along with his master, received a commission for all captives dragged out of the bush.

Sherman's complaints were backed by affidavits from Senator J. W. Roberts of Sinoe, and County Superintendent Grigsby, who had seen the slaves being escorted by soldiers to the Ross compound—two troopers being assigned to each ten men. Ross first offered a bribe to Sherman to withdraw the case, but the official stood his ground, telling Ross point-blank that he expected to break slavery in Liberia by breaking the Honorable Sammy.

Ross made a hurried trip to Monrovia and talked long and earnestly with his friend, President King. Sherman was summarily fired as Postmaster General, and the man whom he was prosecuting was appointed in his place. J. J. Witherspoon, the young District Attorney in charge of the prosecution, was also dis-

missed, as was County Superintendent Grigsby. Watson was transferred to Hinterland District No. 2, while the case against Sammy was quietly marked off the docket at the February term of court. The mood of the genial Sammy became more expansive as the profits mounted from his “labor agency.” He paraded in resplendent new clothes down Ashmun Street, drank the finest imported whiskeys, and preached the loudest sermons that had ever been heard in the chapels of Monrovia—which takes its religion and its liquor straight. . . .

At night, after the cares of state had been disposed of by the indefatigable statesmen, there were other matters which claimed the attention of the Postmaster General and the man whom he maintained in the Presidency. Ross’ foster-son testified before the League Commission that King regularly visited Sammy on various evenings to receive his percentage of the fees paid by the Spanish syndicate to the ring. Yancey was holding up his end of the business at the same time by imposing heavy fines upon the native chiefs in his district, and by then requiring them to furnish so many workers for Fernando Po in payment. Any native who refused to go was flogged within an inch of

his life by the brutal Blackett or by some Frontier Force private, and then marched off to one or another compound.

The world outside seldom heard the cries of those who were torn from their families to satisfy the avarice of Liberia's officials. Now and then native chiefs, who felt the responsibilities of government far more seriously than did the rulers of Monrovia, spoke up bravely but futilely for their people, as in the complaint which Paramount Chief Jury of Piccannini Cess made to Yancey when the Vice President demanded that he send his men to slavery on the Spanish island. The quotation is taken from the report of the League Commission:

"Mr. Yancey, we are building roads without pay or feeding; we pay taxes without receiving any commission (for the tribal chiefs). We are bearing this condition because here is our country, and yet, the President say we must go to Fernando Po. How can this be done? We cannot send people to Fernando Po and to the road. Where we get such an amount of people?"

Paramount Chief Broh of Freuopo was another of the native leaders who refused to submit in silence to the slave traffic which threatened to uproot and extinguish whole tribes whose ancestors had lived in the

bush hundreds of years before Egypt and Sumeria were built. When Yancey had demanded sixty men for Fernando Po from each paramount chief, Broh had sent messengers to President King in Monrovia to verify the order. The President had squirmed, hesitated for a few minutes, and then denied issuing the order. When the messengers returned, Broh advised the peoples living near Freuropo to ignore the levy.

Yancey had been made a liar by a native. That was an insult which must be punished so drastically that no native would ever dare approach the President about anything in the future. A kidnaping party led by Yancey's attorney, Tubman, and Maryland County Superintendent Brooks, came to the house where Chief Broh was staying temporarily in Piccannini Cess. The Chief was pummeled by his captors, and then shoved into a launch bound for Cape Palmas.

That night the launch stopped at Grand Cess. The party went ashore to sleep, leaving the Chief bound, alone, on the boat. When a storm arose that night, the launch was washed up on shore. All through the night, Chief Broh sat on a rock, the rain and wind beating against his body. When his captors returned the next morning, they found him sitting there proudly and defiantly, like an eagle whose wings are wet.

"At Cape Palmas," according to the testimony given before the League Commission, "he was made a prisoner in the house of Superintendent Brooks, and thus detained, was guarded by a group of Frontier Force soldiers, while others proceeded to his country and arrested forty men. They tied the men with sticks behind their legs, flogged men and women indiscriminately, killed domestic animals, and destroyed Broh's commission from the President as Paramount Chief.

"The soldiers proceeded to the town of the chiefs of Suehn, Topo, Baropo, and Wedabo. These paramount chiefs were placed in confinement with Broh. At Suehn and Wedabo, they [the Frontier Force] came during the night, tying and flogging men and women and helping themselves to rice and fowls.

"Not only did they kill four cows for chop, but Captain Phillips demanded and got 'rum money' amounting to forty pounds. Of twelve men captured at Suehn one of them, Wyley Cajah, died from the beating.

"All of them were removed to Vice President Yancey's farm, and the chiefs were flogged in the presence of their people. Broh was accused of making fools of the other chiefs by his action, and all were fined."

The total sum paid in fines by the four chiefs

amounted to approximately ten thousand dollars in American money besides cattle, rice, and other native property stolen from the natives by the Frontier Force, and carried off to the Yancey estates. Chief Broh's assessment in this haul amounted to four hundred and eighty-two pounds, ten shillings. Two hundred pounds went to Yancey as a sop for the Vice President's injured dignity, seventy-two pounds, ten shillings for the motor launch which had carried Broh to Cape Palmas, another twenty-five pounds to the same two individuals for their expenses, one hundred and ten pounds to Tubman for serving as attorney, and seventy-five pounds for the "commission" sent to inquire into a "non-existent" tribal dispute—the "commission" of course being composed of the kidnapers: Tubman and Brooks.

I have quoted the League of Nations report lest the present Liberian government, which numbers Tubman as one of its leading functionaries, dare deny what I have written in these pages. These same stories, and others which would fill many, many volumes were told to me by the peoples of Jeh and Broh.

I personally know most of the characters in this story, having met them in Monrovia and Kakata.

Had President Barclay, in the fashion of a far

greater leader, Abraham Lincoln, abolished slavery in his country, this chapter would have been a record of Liberia's progress rather than Liberia's continued stagnation. But as I write this, natives unable to pay fines assessed by rural magistrates are being held in pawn and made to labor long hours, without pay, until the often unjust penalties are paid. There are other natives who have been held as pawns for twenty years for having committed misdemeanors which would draw a suspended sentence of thirty days in this country.

For slavery, whatever may be the pious phrases in the Liberian Constitution, is the law in practice in Liberia—the law which supports Supreme Court Justice W. V. S. Tubman, partner and attorney for the slavers, and the true candidate of the True Whigs for President of Liberia in the next election.

## CHAPTER IV

### *L I B E R I A N   L A W*

“T H O U S H A L T not bear false witness against thy neighbor” is a commandment which Liberian preachers boom out from their pulpits, along with the rest of the prohibitions in the Decalogue. In the minds of the aristocracy, the Ten Commandments may have a certain antique respectability on Sunday, but are hardly worth mentioning when one is dealing with those outside the charmed circle. The Jewish-Christian standards of justice mean as little in the courts dominated by the aristocracy, as the English common law, the Roman code, or any other great definition of right and wrong in modern jurisprudence.

Formal enactments defining offenses and their punishment may be written down in some place in Monrovia, but in practice, every district magistrate is his own lawmaker, acting for his personal convenience,



and only restrained by his very crude judgment of what he can get away with. No country calling itself a republic has ever placed such authority in the hands of its magistrates. Possibly no modern country, with the exception of Nazi Germany, has ever established a judiciary with such arbitrary powers over helpless individuals as this unknown nation shielded from the wrath of the democratic world by its obscurity. Perjury, discrimination, unmitigated harshness emphasized by pomp and deceit—these are the cornerstones of a legal system which makes the most corrupt court in the United States seem like a tribunal of wisdom and mercy by comparison.

One of my native laborers took from the Firestone properties two planks with which he planned to repair the door of his hut. He was walking down the road from the plant to the labor camp carrying the planks on his head, native fashion, when he was overtaken by one of the plantation policemen. This happened at about three o'clock one morning.

"Where you go wid dem plank?" the officer demanded.

"I take dem for my part," the native replied, my part meaning myself or mine, in the pidgin English of the bush.

"Did de Boss give dem to you?"

"Oh no, but tomorrow-morning-time, I ask Boss for dem."

"Aha," the policeman shouted in the language of the people, "you rogue [stole] dem. You be rascal."

"I never be rascal," the native protested, "I tell Bosso come tomorrow-morning-time."

The policeman grabbed the worker by the shoulders and ordered him to carry the planks to the near-by jail hut. The Arm of the Law walked behind, kicking and pushing the culprit, and calling him all sorts of names until they reached the jail. Then he bound the native with cord and threw him inside the shack, saying:

"Tomorrow-time I take you for the court-palaver."

Next morning the native was brought before a Liberian judge and accused of stealing Firestone property. The courthouse was built by Firestone money on Firestone-rented land. The Americo-Liberian judge has little time to waste on a bush native who earns eighteen cents a day when the defendant's accuser is the corporation which showers the magistrate with favors. After a few routine questions, the native was sentenced to twenty-five lashes on the bare back at two o'clock that afternoon.

I felt sick in the lowest part of my stomach when I heard that sentence pronounced. That morning I had driven the native, the policeman, and the policeman's messenger to the court in the Ford car supplied me by Firestone. Knowing that such a trifling offense in the United States would mean either a suspended sentence or, at the worst, a small fine, I believed the judge would be lenient. The policeman was on my payroll, hired by the company to protect its property down to the last rusty nail, so, I was required to appear in court even though I was not called to testify. I would have directed the native to return the planks and docked him a day's pay had I caught him, and let it go at that; but in spite of his pleading as we drove back, there was nothing I could do. He had been caught in the act of theft by a sharp-eyed native policeman; now he must suffer the vicious consequences of a code that is itself vicious and inhuman.

In all my experience in Africa, it was the first legal whipping I had ever seen. When the native took off his torn shirt to receive the lash, I wondered how many slave ancestors of that smug hireling who ordered the punishment had once been beaten by their masters on the plantations in Georgia or Alabama for taking a piece of sidemeat when they were hungry.

When I looked at the humble man who stoically prepared for the ordeal, there rushed over me an understanding that was nausea added to resentment. Underneath the high-powered advertising and shrewd promotion of the Firestone Company, I was seeing in pitiless operation the civilization represented by all such companies who have built colossal, private empires upon lacerated, overworked human flesh.

It would have taken the native three days of labor to have paid for two planks had he wanted to buy them. The timber from which the planks were cut had belonged to people of his tribe. Kinsmen of his, native sawyers, had worked in the hot sun to cut down that timber which became the property of a foreign monopoly determined to exact the last farthing either in blood or cash for the last stick of wood. My native worker was to pay with his blood, by edict of a servile judge, a sum which a Firestone executive would have scorned to leave as a tip in an American restaurant.

The native waited calmly for his beating as the policeman withdrew to change into his best clothes. The officer had been wearing a pair of blue and white striped pajamas when he had caught the native the night before. Those or any clothes would be proper for an arrest, but a holiday, such as beating a man,

demanding something a little more appropriate. I believe the executioners in France before this present war used to wear silk hats and formal morning coats when they carried out the verdicts of the courts. My policeman appeared wearing a college cap given him by a Liberian student, and a shiny blue serge suit with vest complete, which he had inherited, no doubt, from some former boss.

At a command from the policeman, the worker went to the jail hut and picked up the stolen planks lying in front of the door. In the presence of hundreds of other natives gathered to watch the beating, he lay face down on the planks. The officer drew a long breath, stepped forward and coiled the thin strong reed which he carried in his hand over the back of the prostrate man.

There was a sharp whistling noise as the reed bit like wire into the taut muscles of the man underneath. "One," the policeman counted. Then he walked around to the other side. "Two," he said, as the second blow cut deep into the tender flesh and a rivulet of blood trickled down the man's spine. By the time the tenth blow had been struck, the man's back was a mass of raw, bleeding flesh with the loosened skin hanging in strips like disconnected thongs of leather.

I wondered how any human being could stand more of that torture. The policeman didn't wonder, he went efficiently about his work, his face showing no concern, no feeling. The even-numbered blows were struck on the right side of the man's back, the odd-numbered blows on the left. Not one portion of the exposed flesh escaped the stinging, whining lash, not one nerve and muscle but felt the searing, unaccustomed shock of that reed whip, and not one sound escaped the native.

When he finally counted twenty-five, the policeman rolled down his sleeves of his coat and shirt of his right arm. He had not removed his coat or vest during the beating. Now he was perspiring as freely as the running water of a river. He wiped his face on a silk handkerchief and commanded the native to replace the planks on the pile from which he had stolen them. The planks were as bloody as the man's back when he placed them on his head and stumbled along toward the heap of lumber. The only thing I could do was take the native to my dresser, and have his back treated so that no infection would set in.

My workman had been drastically punished for taking the private property of that huge, impersonal entity, the Firestone Company. But the same tender consideration is not shown by the courts of Liberia

when the native's own property is involved. The sacred rights of property and of person break down in the Liberian courts if a native happens to be a plaintiff against the company. A man's basic property is his home, and his home is his castle—that is one of the many democratic concepts which we are fighting to see realized out in the African bush, as well as in every country of the world. That principle is deeply rooted in the elementary need for security of every family unit in the world; kings have been beheaded for violating it.

In Liberia, where justice is not blind, but deaf, any native who does not pay his annual hut tax simply has his roof torn down over his head. Without a hearing, an Americo-Liberian judge will order the oppressive tax paid within a certain number of days. When the time has expired and no money is forthcoming, policemen, or members of the frontier force arrive to wreck the house. After producing the warrant which neither they nor the native can read, they proceed to tear down the flimsy hut. If the evicted family protests, they are simply driven out into the roadway or trail and the few belongings in the hut are either carried away by the policeman or just tossed outside.

Huts in an agrarian country like Liberia mean

crops, and crops would threaten the land monopoly of the barons in Monrovia. Therefore, the courts, whose magistrates are appointed for indefinite terms, use their judicial power to prevent the rise of any independent farming element in the country.

America gave free land to the early homesteaders who cleared its forests and built straggling pioneer communities which later became the great cities of our day. We enacted special legislation to protect the homes and fields of the settlers against the mortgage-holders and tax collectors. A man found a piece of land and planted a patch of corn—that was the American dream. And it was originally the Liberian dream: the ideal of a new republic sprouting up in enslaved Africa, where black homesteaders could build a democracy of the black men.

But no Liberian native may put democracy in action by planting a crop unless he first pays the government a tax amounting to five dollars in American money before he clears a patch of jungle. After he has planted his field and tended it with the help of his family, he must, under the law, remit a further tax of five dollars before he may harvest his own rice. If this remains unpaid, a judge, without bothering to send him a citation to appear in court, can find him



guilty of trespassing. Then the omnipotent police come with their warrants and carry him to jail. His crop can rot for all the judge or government may care. If this policy is a sure protection for that shabby government which may rob men of their dignity and of their labor, it is also a guarantee to the Firestone Company that it will always have a huge and terrified reserve of cheap labor. When men are not allowed to live by their own enterprise, then they must depend upon the enterprise of anybody who will pay enough to permit them to subsist and reproduce their kind. Generally that means a group of specially privileged native custodians of their master's interests: the Negro straw boss on the southern plantation, the Negro judge and the Negro policeman in Firestone's rented empire.

The Firestone officials, like the Roman governors of ancient Palestine, find it wise to uphold the prestige of their native hirelings even at the expense of their white staff. If an individual white man brings charges against an individual Negro, the case is invariably dismissed for the "lack of sufficient evidence." Whereupon the Negro immediately sues the white for "defamation of character," and the superintendent is ordered to pay damages amounting generally from twelve American dollars to twenty-five

dollars. If the staff member refuses to pay, the company sends the money to the court, and charges costs of the proceedings to its employee's monthly account.

Needless to say, the courts have no idea of protecting the natives as such in these little by-plays on justice, but, by encouraging the Negro to believe that they stand with him against the white man, they keep the majority of the two races hostile to each other. *"Divide and rule": that oldest trick of imperialism* works perfectly in Liberia where it preserves both the political domination of black Monrovia and the economic supremacy of the lily-white Firestone Company.

During my stay in Liberia, I helped to prevent a near race riot after the wife of a Firestone superintendent had been attacked by her native steward. Let me say here that the majority of Liberian natives are neither rapists nor murderers, and that the conduct of this individual is not typical of his people whom I know as well as I know the people of my own country. The woman's life and honor were saved by her other servants who rushed to her rescue as she ran from her house with the drunken steward behind her. When I questioned those servants they were ashamed and apologetic that their "white missy" had been insulted

and bothered by one of their own kind. One of them told me he wished the boy had died when she hit him over the head with a native vase after he invaded her home. I believe they were sincere.

These two servants testified against the steward when he was brought into court to appear before the Americo-Liberian judge named Collins on the next day. Collins is also a "Firestone Judge," presiding in a fine new court built of bricks—as was the modern bungalow also built for his comfort by the company.

The magistrate was bored and somewhat impatient with the testimony given by the woman's Negro cook and washboy. When the woman took the stand, he listened indulgently as if he were hearing the complaint of a child. Very often he would break into her story and discredit some of the statements she made. Then he spoke to her, and gave his verdict:

"You were wrong in hitting your servant with the vase," he said. "You should have met force with force. He had nothing in his hands. You should have taken nothing in your hands. For your attack on the boy I fine you three pounds. The case against the servant is dismissed because of insufficient evidence and because you committed a greater crime than he."

When that decision was handed down, the white

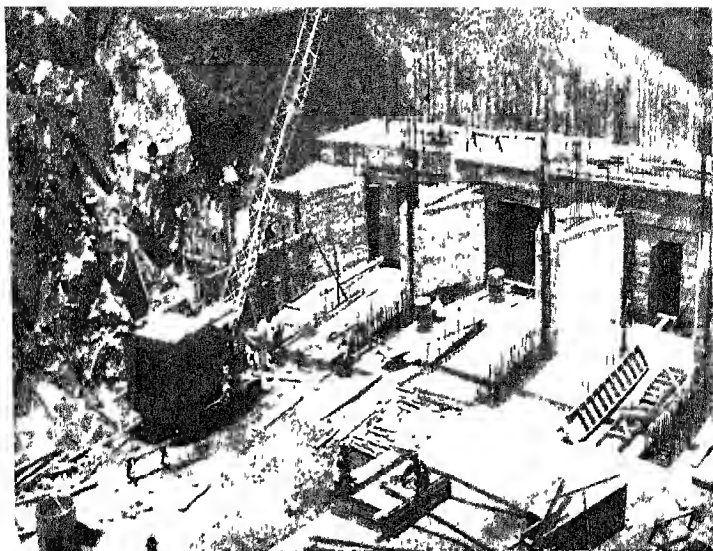
*Returning from a shopping tour*



*Mandingo chief  
and sub-chiefs*



*The end of the  
day—natives re-*



*Dam construction*



*Wharf at Monrovia*

*Front street in Monrovia*



men on the plantation banded together and strapped on their revolvers. "We are going to shoot up that court and then smash it with a tractor. We'll fill full of lead any nigger who gets in our way, and once and for all teach them to leave us white men alone."

I know what lynchings in the southern United States mean. I know also that Negroes receive as little consideration from the courts of that section as white people receive in the Liberian courts. It took me a long time to persuade that raging group to put down their guns, and agree to go with me to Monrovia to see the American consul. I wanted them to do the thing in a legal and sensible manner. When we arrived in the capital, we found that the consul, a man who had leaned toward the Monrovia clique too often, had been called home by the State Department. Lieutenant Colonel Henry McBride, the military envoy, listened to our story and commented:

"I had heard things were bad in this country, but I did not know they were that bad. I know how you all feel, but I would urge you not to do anything drastic at this time. The American troops will be coming here soon and any action of violence will injure your country's war program."

We faithfully promised we would not commit any

acts of violence if we could avoid it, but we informed him that if the judge could not be persuaded to see the light, it might prove very unfortunate for that magistrate.

We were very pleased when later, under pressure, the judge seemed to realize he had made a great mistake and reversed his decision against the woman, and the steward disappeared into the bush.

But the problem which we faced at that trial is still unsolved by Liberia—the problem of seeing that justice is administered according to the ethics of civilized law rather than according to the caprices of judges who have never looked into a book of law. There are many native chiefs who show far more common sense in handling cases than those miserable caricatures of justice who preside over the law courts in Liberia. The profound sense of equity to be found among the people of the bush must be combined with time-honored sanctions of European law to preserve both a man's corn and a man's life.

The new code must provide for that fundamental guarantee of law—trial by jury. At present, jury trial is granted only when a defendant appeals to the supreme court in Monrovia. And then the jurors are always picked henchmen of the clique—while costs

are prohibitive to the average native. Some degree of control must be exercised by the people over their magistrates, either through election or the right to compel any judge to answer for his acts before some specially constituted tribunal which will function both within the spirit and the letter of the law.

I have no doubt that wise and just laws will be enacted by the people of Liberia when they have the chance, as free men in a free world, to say how they will be governed and by whom the laws shall be made. And I am equally confident that their choice will not be a representative of the Firestone Company.



## CHAPTER V

# M R . F I R E S T O N E R E N T S A N E M P I R E

“—we are glad to have the privilege of defending Mr. Firestone in Liberia. We defend the State Department at Washington and Secretary Hoover in promoting American Capital in Liberia.”—*Liberia Express and Agricultural World*, November–December, 1928.

“This year we have no rice because Firestone have taken our lands. We got nothing when Firestone took our lands.—” Testimony of a native chief before the League of Nations Commission of Inquiry, reproduced in the magazine, *West Africa*, January 24, 1931.

LIBERIA'S FAMOUS “Closed Door” swung open to Harvey Firestone, Jr., only because a mob of creditors and invading French troops were threatening to tear down President King's whole house of cards. Harvey Firestone, like a shrewd trader, doesn't talk about the ramifications of that whole Liberian deal which gave American Big Business its first West

African base—at the expense of thousands of black peasants who were uprooted from their little fields to make way for the rubber plantation. One may assume that Herbert Hoover could tell, if he cared to, of long conferences behind closed doors when the fate of peoples was decided by political careerists as coolly as livestock traders decide the fate of cattle. Frank B. Kellogg, then our Secretary of State, carried his part of the deal to the grave. President Edwin Barclay, who was then Secretary of State for Liberia, could also reveal much if he were forced to do so by an international commission set up by the United Nations to help in the development of the African peoples toward democracy. And the native chiefs—leaders of the dispossessed and disinherited—could give before such a body testimony that would rock the very foundations of Harvey Firestone's rented empire.

I have no personal grievance against the Firestone Plantations Company. I was paid well and treated well during my contract of service for them. I give the corporation full credit for the fact that it shows far more consideration to native workers than any other employer in the country. A great part of its labor policy, however, is due to the attitude of its imported superintendents—easy-going, essentially decent men,

who have never permitted themselves to be abused and who will, therefore, not abuse others. I also give credit to the Firestone Company for its fine, ably staffed hospitals which have materially improved the general health of disease-ridden Liberia. But, there again, I know that Firestone is prompted by no altruistic motive in sending doctors and medical equipment to its satrapy. It would certainly be to the disadvantage of the company for its native workers to become sick, spreading disease among their fellow-laborers.

I object to Firestone because my conscience refuses to accept the whole pattern symbolized by the modern conquistadores such as Firestone in Liberia and Cecil Rhodes in South Africa. I am opposed to the subjugation of any human being, whatever his race or color; I object to the tyrannical domination of the rich over the poor through the power exercised by international cartels and boards of directors. And I fear for the peoples of Liberia, as I fear for the peoples of the world, in view of the deals now being carried on in Africa.

Let us then, as we approach victory, remember and profit by the experience of Liberia—and by the example of Firestone.

When the First World War spread like a surging river of torment from the Balkans to Africa, Liberia was "broke as usual." Her small export trade had been ruined by the war; moreover, the Germans, who had coveted the country since the 1840's, were threatening an invasion which might conceivably result in annexation of the little republic to the Hohenzollern Empire. Most reluctantly the Liberian government declared war on Germany, making the ultimate decision because the American State Department, under Secretary Robert Lansing, promised the always-venal rulers of the country that a loan of five million dollars would be forthcoming after the war. As it was, Liberia's part in the war was almost wholly a passive one. Americo-Liberians, as a general rule, have as little energy for the exertion of war as they have for the exertion of carrying a package across the street. Some few citizens of the country enlisted in the French West African forces, but in the main, Liberians waited for the peace treaty to be signed—because five million dollars was a sizable sum to be divided among the loyal hacks of the True Whig Party.

Once the war had ended, President King and Secretary of State Barclay drew the last government funds from the national treasury, and hied themselves

to America to collect the promised five million dollars. Before Liberia's money was spent on pullman fares and hotel bills, they made a grand tour of the United States, speaking before Negro college students or anybody else who would listen to them. When they landed in the country, to the traditional salute of twenty-one guns, the enterprising statesmen felt that the declaration of war, passed by the national legislature, had been a small enough return for the wind-fall soon to descend upon Monrovia. But the period of bubble-blowing was short-lived. Within six months' time, King and Barclay were penniless, unwanted guests in a country anxious to get rid of them in the shortest possible time. Stories are told that they took their meals in twenty-five cent restaurants during those unhappy final months. Meanwhile, the proposed loan had been voted down in the United States Senate because Liberia had never been known to pay, without persistent dunning, any obligation that she had ever contracted, and because liberal American organizations used pressure to prevent payment of money, raised from American taxpayers, to a nation which kept half-a-million of its citizens under the yoke of slavery. Finally, so the story goes, the American government paid the passage of King and Barclay back

to Liberia simply because it did not want to be placed in the position of honoring them at the forthcoming inauguration of President Warren G. Harding.

But that little drama, and its two grotesque principals, had not been lost upon the shrewd, rotund figure who became America's Secretary of Commerce with the close of that aborted "new era" under Woodrow Wilson. As an engineer, Herbert Hoover had bossed jobs performed by underpaid colored workers over a wide section of the world. Like many other American promoters, he may have wondered how the British and Dutch monopoly of rubber might be broken. When he learned that his friend, Harvey Firestone, was seeking a rubber concession in Africa, one can imagine his eyes twinkling—and certainly the machinery of the Department of Commerce soon began to move in the interest of Harvey Firestone.

But there were other considerations in the mind of Herbert Hoover. Agents of the American government in Africa were sending alarming reports to Washington—reports of native unrest, of African independence movements the programs of which were being tapped out by the drums across the breadth of that volcanic, subject continent. The news from Liberia, always regarded as a docile, semi-protectorate of

the United States, was particularly disconcerting to those whose main conception of liberty was to choke it with yards of stocks and bonds.

Under the leadership of the American-born Negro, Roland Faulkner, Liberia had developed a national liberation movement which had its staunch supporters in every village. Both King and Faulkner had attended a conference of native chiefs in one important district of Liberia. The chiefs had wildly applauded Faulkner when he arose to speak. They had told King bluntly that Faulkner would be the next president if they and their people could vote. Kru seamen, who had come in contact with the young labor movement of the British West African possessions, had carried on a successful strike against a foreign shipping company operating out of Monrovia. President King had been powerless to intervene. Had he sent the army against the striking Krus, there would have been a repetition of the Kru-Grebo rebellion of 1913, but supported this time by the organized native workers of British West Africa.

The spirit of unrest had penetrated even to the wives of the Americo-Liberians, who were waging a strong campaign for the extension of suffrage to women. Liberia's situation was even more gravely

complicated by another of her perennial boundary disputes. Foreign troops from French West Africa had occupied the disputed village of Zint. Only the devotion of a Liberian chief who loved his country's soil, even if he despised his country's rulers, had saved Liberia's independence during the most critical hour of the country's existence.

"I no sell my people," the chief had said to the French emissaries who had offered him a huge sum if he would acknowledge the French claim to the slice of territory. "I fight and I ask my brother chiefs to fight, if your men not be gone from here one time."

Speaking of the Firestone deal and its providential loan of five million dollars which saved the crumbling Liberian regime, the *Liberia Express and Agricultural World*, owned by the Ross-Yancey slave ring, admitted in its issue of July, 1928, that "the Liberian government was led to believe that if it wished the support of the United States against France, who was threatening its independence, it should accept the Liberian loan."

But, in justice to Mr. Firestone and Mr. Hoover, it should be said that little persuasion was necessary to induce Secretary of State Edwin Barclay to accept



that loan, amounting to a mortgage on the entire republic, when Monrovia's "prime minister" journeyed to the company's headquarters at Akron in 1926. On this trip Mr. Barclay did not have to depend upon the doubtful cuisine of cheap restaurants and corner hot-dog stands for his nourishment. He was wined and dined in state, both by the officials at Washington and by the officials of Firestone. President Calvin Coolidge, in his accustomed fashion, said nothing about the bargaining that one assumes was going back and forth between Washington and the representatives of Monrovia. That business was apparently left strictly to Mr. Hoover and his Department of Commerce "experts" before it was given final confirmation by the State Department headed by Frank B. Kellogg, previously voted out of the United States Senate by his constituents in Minnesota.

Some day, after peace and freedom have come to the tired peoples of the earth, it may be recorded—what one now can only assume—that two presidents were made at the conferences held in the Firestone offices at Akron—Herbert Hoover, as President of the United States; and Edwin Barclay, as President of Liberia. But that story will have to be written in the future. Barclay's immediate objective in the

conferences was to lease Firestone a huge amount of land in return for a large sum that would not have to be repaid. But the shrewdest lawyer in Monrovia was evidently no match for the keen-witted attorneys of the Akron corporation.

Firestone would make no agreement unless Liberia agreed to accept a loan which would prevent Britain or France from ever obtaining control of the country. When Barclay insistently demanded a straight-out lease price with no strings attached, Secretary of State Kellogg joined Firestone in using pressure upon the visiting dignitary. Liberia was in no position to demand, Barclay was told firmly but politely; Liberia, if she wished to continue as a sovereign nation, must accept whatever bounty America offered her—and on America's own terms.

Thus, one million acres of Liberia's richest land, or any smaller area that Firestone might designate from time to time, fell into the hands of the rubber company for an annual rental of six cents per acre plus a 1 per cent revenue tax on the value of all rubber and other commercial products shipped out of the country. In addition, Firestone was given prescriptive rights to develop any industry in the country, thus protecting itself not only against competing British

and French interests, but against fellow-monopolists from America as well.

The Firestone Company agreed to use its influence to secure the loan of five million dollars for its new step-child. Eventually, the Finance Corporation of America agreed to advance this sum, but stipulated that all but a quarter of a million dollars would be applied to the payment of the republic's back obligations, and that its finances must henceforth be administered by American advisors. These advisors were to supervise the collection of all Liberia's revenues—internal and external; and to audit her expenditures. Her fiscal history since has been one of continual haggling with the Finance Corporation of America which demanded prompt repayment, with fruitless appeals to the Firestone Company for ready cash, and with attempts—blocked by both the Finance Corporation and the Firestone Company—to borrow from fellow-members of the League of Nations.

Meanwhile Firestone agents had come to the little country to claim their pound of flesh—or rather their acres of ground. While Monrovia's officials merrily blew in the quarter of a million dollars in ready cash supplied from the loan, Monrovia's soldiers went merrily out into the forests to drive the tribes off the

land. Firestone surveyors staked out claims for their masters over the smoking ruins of burnt villages. Peaceful peoples, who had held their lands in fee simple for hundreds of years, found themselves driven far back into the interior, while the soldiers seized their herds and their rice for chop. But not one Americo-Liberian lost his land through seizure; that was the tragedy only of the peasants.

Hungry natives who had been dispossessed by Firestone were among those thousands who came to the plantations looking for work. This situation threatened to upset the whole slave economy of the country, and thus undermine the ring which did a profitable business from its barracoons. Who would be left for the slave traders to kidnap for Fernando Po or for their own private estates, if everybody went to work for Firestone? Monrovia answered this question in Monrovia's fashion.

One of the Americo-Liberian lawyers dug out an old statute which provided for the establishment of a national labor bureau to regulate terms and conditions of employment. The law had been a gesture to world opinion alarmed by the recurrent tales of slavery that came out of the country. No labor commissioner had ever been appointed, and the law itself had

been very quickly forgotten, once it had been enacted.

Now, after fourteen years, the bureau was put in operation. The private agents of the slave ring became the official "labor agents" of the government, bargaining with Firestone to furnish him help for a penny per day per head—or whatever other sum they could get. The Americo-Liberians were not only earning money for themselves: they were, at the same time, insuring the continuance of the traffic, which, better than anything else, is the final proof of their personal degeneracy and their incompetence to rule anybody.

Further to regulate the supply of workers going to Firestone, the Americo-Liberians had their Army and Frontier Force block every route leading to the plantations. Hundreds of people en route to Firestone properties were flogged and sent back to their villages; hundreds of others were seized and sent off to Fernando Po.

After the League exposé of slavery, the Firestone corporation insisted on hiring its own labor without the assistance of the government. But it is significant that it has made no attempt to use its influence to better conditions outside of its own properties, although

it is, in fact, that country's master, able, if it chose, to squeeze the little martinet government between the fingers of its corporate hand.

## CHAPTER VI

### S M A L L S A M

I STARED at the emaciated little boy whom my Buzzi headman, James, had brought to be my body servant.

“What the hell,” I exclaimed, “this kid is too damn weak to work. He may be fifteen years old, but I’ll bet he doesn’t weigh sixty pounds. Why, he looks as if he hasn’t had a square meal since he left his mother’s milk.”

James answered me patiently: “I beg you Boss give him one chance, he be fine boy too much. His name be Penne Sam, Boss, that mean, Small Sam.”

“I can understand where he got that name by just looking at him,” I said shortly.

Small Sam had remained silent during the talk with James, but when the headman had finished, he smiled in a wistful, friendly way. His even white teeth set off his ebony face as white modulates black

in a drawing. Something made me say, "All right, I agree, I give him ninepence a day." Then I pulled a cigarette out of my case and before I could light it with a match, Small Sam ran over to a fire where some laborers were roasting cassada, and came back with a fire stick to light my smoke. It was the first of many services Small Sam was to perform for me. This was the beginning of a friendship I still consider my strongest personal link to that unhappy, smoldering country. In a very real sense, Small Sam was the real beginning of my interest in all of his two million countrymen, penalized for the very act of living by their selfish rulers. As a type, he is Liberia's present and future, the still unrecognized citizen of the bush, who will rebuild on modern lines the ancient African civilization as foreign as lost Atlantis to most of us.

As an engineer, I have known many people both on social and business planes. I have sat at many a soirée where the process of getting acquainted with an individual was tedious in comparison with the association which I was to develop with this little bush boy a week after he had begun to serve me. Sam was scrupulously clean, washing himself as carefully as a cat before he brought me my lime juice at waking time in the morning. I felt that any native—especially one



so young and who was so careful about his personal appearance—must have a very strong reserve of personal dignity and self-respect which I wanted to develop. In the evenings, when my work was finished, and the odor of palm oil from the near-by campfires overhung the air, I would question Small Sam about his life.

There wasn't much he could tell me except that he was born in a Buzzi village near the French border, a six-day walk from the Liberian town of Salala in the east. Before his true brother, James, had brought him to me, he had spent six months in a little mission school where he had learned to read a little and write. Sam had been a model pupil, I learned. He never questioned the authority of his teachers, and always performed cheerfully the work that was required of him for his maintenance. Instinctively, he had seen that he might learn something from the white man's way of living. When he had first been given a piece of clean, fragrant soap he had joyously lathered and bathed his little black body until he had emerged like a young buffalo, dripping and exultant. But he had wanted more intimate contact with the white man than just the hurried relationship of a white teacher to his native pupil. He had welcomed the chance to come to

me and now he was quietly storing up knowledge of the white man's customs, determined, I suppose, to adopt the white man's manner of getting things done—even if he never adopted the religion of those he so much admired. That was one of the best things about Small Sam and the future young native leaders like him—that Sam and his brothers showed that they will be able to appropriate the white man's efficiency, without becoming minstrel-show-caricatures of their teachers.

Already at fifteen my “small-boy” had rejected the cunning little dishonesties which pass for the only commerce in Liberia—dishonesties which are natural reactions of poor people to the white invaders who have seized the fertile wealth of their soil.

There was a day when the rush of work prevented me from leaving the job at the usual time to go to my house for my usual meal at noontime. A native boy came peddling bananas, and offered me six for three cents. I had put my hand in my pocket to bring out the necessary money when Small Sam turned on the boy with all the fury of a little jungle beast.

“Why you try rogue my boss?” he shouted. “The bananas cost six for two cent—you go just now and you never come back, or I kill you.”

That incident made me realize one thing: that I must learn to know Sam's people, the Buzzi, as I had begun to know Sam. When we returned home that night I said to Sam:

"Better so I know black man's talk. Den I never be humbugged by de bad black man. You teach me de Buzzi, yah?"

We, who think we know it all, know nothing. I learned from Sam many things which today have helped me in my everyday living. It wasn't so much the language of the Buzzi people, but rather the homely psychology with which I was injected with every day's teachings. Once I mastered Buzzi, every dialect in Liberia was simple for me. Today, I can go the length and breadth of Liberia, and can make myself understood—all because Small Sam had the patience to sit with me, night after night, and teach me the words of that difficult, highly idiomatic speech.

"What do Ungar mean?" Sam would refer back to a word that he had told me the preceding night.

"That means Hello," I would answer.

"Den you must write it down, Boss," he would say. After we had finished reviewing the vocabulary, he would teach me sentences, and requiring me also to

put them in writing until I had compiled a polyglot dictionary. Within three months I could sit with Chief Arku of the Buzzis and talk with him, while Small Sam squatted at a respectful distance and listened to our conversation, beaming admiringly as I chatted with the paramount ruler of his tribe.

But if Small Sam is the person who broke down that wall of language between me and his people, he is also the person to whom I owe my life today. Very few white men escape the malaria carried by mosquitoes from the sullen swamps and stagnant water-holes in Africa. During the days when I seemed to be a molten piece of the blazing African sun, Small Sam was the person who brought me water, who gave me my medicine, who sat motionless and impassive outside the door of my room until I called him to fill some need.

That was during the rainy season. After the rains had gone, and the swollen rivers had abated like a pregnant woman delivered of her child, the Liberian earth began to bloom. The sap rose upward in the body of Sam as it did in the trunks of the rubber trees. He was beginning to feel his young manhood, his scrawny little frame had filled out to one hundred

and ten pounds. I was not surprised when Small Sam showed up one morning, leading a shy, little black girl by the hand.

"She be my small, small missy. I think I buy her," he said.

I had to think fast, because I had other plans for this loyal youngster. "No, I not agree for dat," I told him. "You must go to school and learn; by and by, dere be plenty of time for missies. You go see her and she come see you, but you stay with me." This was the first time that Sam had ever looked doubtful and undecided when I had given him an order. He looked first at the timid little girl and then at me. In a moment, I was glad that Sam was still a boy in his teens and not a grown man. For love, after all, is a very hard thing to cast aside. I gave him plenty of time to make his answer. Then he said:

"I agree for dat one, Boss. Soontime when dey plant de rice two, three more time, den, she be good for we."

The girl's parents had wanted to get rid of her immediately to Sam. Even after I had let it be known that I didn't agree to Sam's buying a wife, his future in-laws came to my house, looking for extra rice. This I refused—not because I begrudged them a few pounds of rice—but because I saw that they were try-

ing to move in on Small Sam, figuratively speaking, and get him to support them for the rest of their lives. The girl herself was not mercenary. Daily, she would come over in the afternoon and sit with Sam, fixing his rice for evening time. I never knew the tribal name of Sam's missy, but somewhere he had heard the name of Louise, and that was what he called her. Sam, as cautious as the proverbial Scot about his money, would forget his thrift, and would always pick up some trinket to take to Louise. There was never a time when we stopped at a native trading-center that Sam would not look for a little mirror, a comb, or perhaps a handkerchief.

Sam knew I was living, by choice and by the necessity of completing my job, the life of a celibate. Native women would come daily to my door, hoping to sell themselves for a few shillings, but Sam always got to the door first, and with a deep frown on his black forehead he would invariably say:

"My boss he not need de missy part. Go just now."

And they knew he wasn't fooling.

Then came the day I was to leave Liberia for America. Sam had saved fifty dollars from his pay, hoping to come to my country with me. It was hard for me to refuse.

"De war palaver be hardo," I had to tell him. "Better so I put you to de mission part unless you want to get job wid odder white man."

"No Bosso"—there was a quaver in his voice—"I never go to odder white man again—better I go for de mission."

This was the first time I had ever seen Sam break down and weep. Big tears came into his eyes and ran down his black cheeks, but he quickly recovered himself and said:

"You go, Bosso, I go to de mission and wait for you to come back. If you not come, I get to your country and I find you."

Sam will be waiting patiently. If this war should drag on for years, Sam will be doing his daily chores at my friend's mission, saving his pennies and hoping for the gods to bring him his one desire—to be with me again.

The other superintendents, knowing of my leaving, would come to Sam and ask him to work for them. One man in particular came over on the night before I left, and cornered Sam. He offered the youngster double what I was paying the boy, but Sam refused. Sam told him he would never work for a white man again. Finally the staff member said:

"But Sam, after all Boss going home—what if he dies?"

Sam very quietly answered, "If Boss die, den I die also."

I took Sam to the mission the day before I left, and as he was about to leave me he gave me a native hunting knife as a present and a woven handbag, "for your missy."

His eyes dimmed with tears as he gave me his tribal salute—which I gravely returned. Then desperately trying not to cry, he turned, walking erectly in the direction of the mission house.



## CHAPTER VII

### BURIED TREASURE

“THE MINERAL resources of Liberia are not fully known. Explorations have not been extensive, yet sufficient has been done to locate diamonds, gold, iron, and mica. There are evidences of other mineral deposits. The Liberian Gold and Diamond Syndicate did considerable exploration and mining in and near Jiblong, a site in the vicinity of Careysburg. Gold and diamonds were recovered but the main lodes were not discovered at the time when the World War put an end to their activities.”—*Handbook of Liberia, (quasi-official publication of the Liberian government at Monrovia).*

The World War is always the stock excuse given by the Liberian politicians for their failure to take any steps which might develop the rich, untapped resources of their private duchy. The disturbances

brought about in all nations during the First World War hardly excuse the neglect of Liberia's badly needed resources during this second great conflict.

Much of the mineral wealth which the United Nations relied on to conduct this war has either fallen into the hands of the Axis invaders or else are prevented from reaching the Western democracies by roving enemy ships. In addition, the Axis countries have in their hands all the confiscated wealth and natural resources of occupied Europe. With French North Africa gradually yielding to the Allied forces, some immediate steps can be taken to utilize the hidden wealth of this stubborn little republic which hangs on as tenaciously to a primitive agrarian economy as did the slave-holders of the South before the Civil War.

Liberian exports, according to the heavily padded figures of the government, average slightly more than two million dollars annually. Over one million dollars of that total is accounted for by the exports of the crude rubber sent to America from the Firestone plantations. The unlimited supply of native labor which can be trained—as the Belgian government has trained the tribesmen of the Congo—could be utilized to uncover the immense wealth of Liberia, which

lies either buried under the earth or rotting on its surface.

There is enough gold in Liberia to start a boom which would eclipse California's spectacular rush of '49, but there is not one single gold mine in Liberia. The last official export report that I saw indicated that approximately twenty-five hundred troy ounces of the precious metal had been shipped out at a value of \$65,063 during the preceding year. All of it, however, had been washed out of the streams by natives and traded around by them to merchants who finally gave it in payment for foreign goods. Always before, in history, the laziest ruling class has shown some initiative when it came to acquiring the treasure by which the world measures the sale value of all its commodities, but the ruling class of Liberia, unlike that of Spain, is so flabby that it lacks even the energy to go seeking for the wealth out in the bush.

I wear on my finger a native ring of solid gold given to me by workers as a farewell present when I left Liberia. The metal in that ring was "panned" from streams far back in the interior; and in the beds of those streams lie tons of the yellow wealth, waiting for somebody to dig it up with a shovel. Natives,

earning a few pennies a day in wages, were always coming to me, asking:

“Boss, do you want to buy gold?”

I have seen diamonds made into ornaments by natives who had found them lying on the ground. I have seen quantities of mica imbedded in the rocks and left there as if it were so much worthless flint, simply because the Liberian government has as little interest in developing the country's native resources as it has in developing the country's native tribes. Yet people plus resources add up to the simple equation of an organized, well-conducted society as against one which is chaotic, economically insufficient, and politically unstable. The United Nations right now are in vital need of both diamonds and mica for the deadly, high-precision instruments which must be used along with the moral armaments of democracy to defeat the new barbarian invasion of fascism. In the long run, the indolence of that government, its incapacity to grasp the spiritual issues of this war, mean more deaths of Allied soldiers and more unnecessary misfortunes in battle—much of which would be avoided were Liberia a responsible and functioning part of the democratic world.

Millions of American housewives are adding cereal to their stated ration of coffee because the coffee supply has become limited with Japan's temporary conquest of a large part of the Far East, and because the normal export from the Dutch East Indies has been cut off by the Mikado's war machine. The coffee bean goes to seed in Liberia like wild berries drying on the bush in New Jersey or Georgia. The Liberian bush could produce enough of the beverage to supply all of America's civilians and all of America's armed forces, if coffee growing had ever been developed as an industry in the country. Even before World War II, when it was a simple matter to ship these products to the markets of the world, nothing was done about it. The same thing can be said about cocoa—which is almost unavailable at American stores as I write this—and about palm oil, which could be utilized as a very palatable substitute for the olive oil which once came to us from Italy and Spain.

Nor can there be any material progress without factories—because factories mean jobs, wages, and educated workers to man the wheels. Liberia has the unharnessed water power for a gigantic program of electrification similar to the Tennessee Valley Authority program in our Deep South. Such a program

would mean inevitably the development of industry in our meaning of the word. It would mean factories and mills, mines and shops which would be reflected inevitably in the development of progressive political institutions as well as in a native culture, combining all the best elements of the different tribal folkways. But in this fourth year of the war, Liberia has only one hydro-electric project: the one I helped to build for the Firestone Company on the Farmington River.

"Liberia has not reached a real manufacturing stage as yet." Thus the *Handbook of Liberia* apologizes for the continued waste of the country's resources, almost one hundred years after the nation's Declaration of Independence. "Manufactured articles are largely imported. A few industries are operated which largely supply local needs."

Actually, the Monrovia oligarchy for its own very good reasons has discouraged any attempt toward the building of factories. It permitted the Firestone Rubber Company to come in simply because the government was penniless after years of graft and extravagance which did not put one pair of shoes on one pair of native feet. Even today, Barclay, Tubman, Grimes, and the other leading figures of the clique, have no love for Firestone as such. But they have constant need

of Firestone's cash to maintain—even if for only a little while longer—a regime already condemned by the fury, swelling like a hurricane, back in the bush. The clique fears the coming of industry as the southern slave owners feared the issuance of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. When the Firestone Company first came to Liberia, it wanted to pay its native laborers the high wages, for Africa, of one dollar a day. But the rulers insisted on maintaining a coolie scale ranging from sixteen cents for unskilled labor to seventy-two cents for clerks, overseers, and foremen. Higher wages would have hastened the doom of the aristocracy—for men with money in their pockets are considerably less servile than men who must constantly beg to supplement the slender wages they earn as coolies. Men with money in their pockets would have eventually demanded the ballot and schools for their children. Men with money in their pockets would have eventually turned out the rotting little cabinet and legislature in a political revolution that would have shaken the structures of both foreign imperialism and domestic tyranny in huge, enslaved Africa. Firestone saw the point, and gave in to the frantic cabinet, concerned not for the future of anybody but themselves, hoping to postpone the eventual

settlement—as did the old man of Vichy France—by compromising with the foreigner who had power behind him.

But settlement might no longer be postponed if other corporations were allowed to develop in the country. The plantations of the Barclays, and the rest of Liberia's feudal barons, would be stripped of peons as native workers went to the factories. Much the same thing is happening to the sharecropping system in the South, as farmhands leave the big estates for the defense plants. There would arise in Liberia, as it is rising in neighboring Sierra Leone, a labor movement uniting all the workers of the various tribes, exacting not only living wages for its members, but also such minimum social guarantees as the abolition of the hut tax and the right to vote. Barclay and his satellites are shrewd enough to realize all of this; they know that the end of their plantation economy would also mean the end of them as rulers.

Thus, industries die when they have exhausted their capital, and Monrovia heaves a sigh of relief when they disappear into nothing. The ill-fated Liberian Gold and Diamond Syndicate sunk a few shafts and sold some stock. Whatever the intentions, honest or otherwise, of its promoters, it was beaten from the



start. There were no roads, either to transport the heavy machinery required for mining or to bring back the ore to the shipping point, Monrovia. The abandoned "mines" of the syndicate are today so many stagnant pools of water whose only output is millions of malaria germs. Some planters along the St. Paul River organized a sugar coöperative association and bought some machinery. The United Nations needs sugar, both in the production of ammunition and for food. But sugar exports from Liberia are negligible with the cane, growing like grass, used principally in the distilling of rum, and that drink which kicks like seven mules called "cane juice." Obviously, the development of the sugar industry by Americo-Liberians would also have its dangers for the Americo-Liberian nobility. It would bring together native workers in large numbers, and these natives might show far less patience with those bullying employers of their own country than they do with Firestone—which, at least, does give them hospitals, and, in general, more equitable treatment than they have ever received from the masters who worked them to death, beating them when they protested.

The same thing can be said for any other undertaking in which members of the Americo-Liberian

aristocracy might engage. Since the productive work would be dangerous to the existing system—work, by elaborate rationalization, must be despised and looked upon by all Liberian gentlemen as something fit only for bush men and whites. A seedy lawyer, with no practice and less knowledge of law, is within the social pale. But if a lawyer should take a job doing honest work with his head or hands, he and his family may expect ostracism for the rest of their days. One can maintain his standing by serving as a thieving customs official or a conniving preacher of an Americo-Liberian church. But under no circumstances is he permitted, by the conventions, to become a shopkeeper or carpenter. Gentlemen's hands may juggle pens to collect exorbitant debts. Those same hands may not plow a field or drive a truck.

That, too, was the attitude of the pre-Civil War South which valued a fox-hunter more than it did a bricklayer. It was not until after the Civil War and the destruction of slavery that the oil, lumber, and other resources of the South began to be developed on a scale where they could serve the whole nation. Production, as such, remained on the level of handicraft—and handicraft is the measure of production in Liberia, with its country squires who hate a smoke-

stack quite as deeply as they hate a free election.

I was always impatient and wrathful when I went to Monrovia and saw the native carpenters and builders working with primitive tools on a few planks, when I knew that my country and its allies needed that lumber for ships and airplanes. Those planks had been brought in by native sawyers whose productive capacity was also limited because their tools were limited. Occasionally a carpenter would begin building a house, after waiting for months until all the necessary lumber had been slowly transported to the capital on native backs. Before the house could be completed, its owner would have run out of money, so that the gaping frame would remain on the street like an unburied skeleton. There are dozens of half-finished houses like this in Monrovia—a waste of even the little lumber that is brought in from Liberia's rich forests. Monrovia has one combination planing mill and woodworking plant—but its output, too, is trifling. Native artisans—boat builders, coopers, tin-smiths, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, and tailors—work with the same painfully slow methods and the same scanty materials as craftsmen of their trades in the Middle Ages.

I think we have stopped romanticizing about the

“quaintness” of countries like Liberia, still relatively untouched by the efficiency and the sophistication of the West. Ethiopia is undoubtedly a “quaint” country, but its economic backwardness contributed to the outbreak of the Second World War. Fascist Italy literally began this war out of greed for the untouched resources of the old African Kingdom of Ethiopia, and Italy was not interested in the Biblical flavor of a country which had maintained its existence since men first began to build civilizations along the Tigris and Euphrates.

Italy wanted Ethiopia's wealth and not Ethiopia's charm. Germany wants Liberia's wealth and not Liberia's “quaintness.” From our standpoint, no nation in the future will have the right to withhold its resources from the world community any more than it will have the right to withhold universal rights of all mankind from any section of its citizens. If heads have to fall to accomplish this, that, too, is part of the grim but historically necessary process.

Needless to say, I do not advocate the plundering of Liberia by greedy nations which, too, disfranchise and rob their own people. I only hope that the post-war world will give us a new concept both of nationality and of world citizenship so that the exploitation

of nation by nation will end as must the exploitation of man by man. The old way—the way of Rhodes and Kitchener—would lead inevitably to a Third World War, complicated this time by a continent-wide revolt of the native peoples which would shake the very pillars of the earth as we know it.

Foreign corporations, which invest in Liberia after the war, should be held to strict contracts with whatever world coördinating body may be set up by the United Nations. These contracts should require regular reports to this body; they should provide for decent wages to the natives with the companies putting back a large share of their earnings into schools, hospitals, and other modern institutions for the people. The right of the people to organize their own associations and unions to enforce these guarantees should be recognized, and protection should be given to see that these groups are not smashed by the foreign investors. The life of such contracts should be limited, so that the industries, after a reasonable time, would be returned to the native peoples to be administered through their own free political institutions, possibly in the form of government leases to individual groups of producers.

That, I think, is the path of freedom for Liberia—

ownership of her country by her people. But that path is still obstructed by the politicians of Monrovia, who must be retired into permanent oblivion both for the sake of their own suffering country and that of the emergent, free world.

I believe that the native people will choose as their first popularly elected ruler somebody who will resemble their own legendary statesman and warrior, King Boatswain.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *K I N G   B O A T S W A I N*

THE GIANT Negro crept as silently as a lion on the veldt to the rail of the schooner. For a moment, he turned to look at the twisted corpse of the white man lying grotesquely huddled by the after-poop-deck and silhouetted in the dim ship's light. Then he turned away and strapped the cutlass he had taken from the corpse around the back of his neck. There was a splash in the water as he dived, followed by the quiet of an African night. Tiny waves lapped at the sides of the boat the master of which lay dead for flogging one of his blacks.

The Negro's big muscles churned the water and pushed him forward through the calm sea like a ship under sail, as he headed for the unguarded strip of beach a mile below Freetown. To land in the Sierra Leone capital itself would be to invite certain arrest.

The appearance of a strange black, caught with a cutlass of value, would cause an investigation, and when the news of the sea-captain's death was reported to the British authorities, it would result in the hanging of the black man. Britain had abolished all legal forms of slavery in 1800, and kept a fleet of fast ships operating up and down the West African coast to run down slavers, but some British captains still trafficked illegally in "black ivory." Some British captains still beat and abused the natives who sailed on their ships. However, the British law, like the other codes of the white man, exacted a life for a life even as did the natives in the jungles.

The Negro kept kicking out in powerful strokes to frighten away any sharks prowling through the waters. When he had completed the first half of his two-mile swim, he reached back with one hand and touched the cutlass resting on his bare broad shoulders. The feel of that cutlass gave him a new surge of power. Other chiefs in West Africa had fawned upon the white traders who gave beaded baubles in exchange for ripe black flesh, but Boatswain, the chief of the Condo people, had mastered a white man in a fair fight, and had taken as a trophy the white man's symbol of authority. Now, he promised himself, it would be his



mark of authority over the squabbling chiefs who cared more for a string of beads than for the safety of their people.

When he landed on the deserted beach, Boatswain stood erect. He ran his big hands gently and with satisfaction down the sharp blade before entering the jungle which bordered the beach. About a mile from the shore, he stopped under a huge cottonwood tree and readjusted the cutlass around his neck so it would hang down his back. Then, with his toes digging into the bark, he climbed the tree native fashion, and went to sleep in its highest branches. When he awoke the next morning, he descended from the tree and set his course south and east toward the country of the Condoes. After walking a few miles, he stopped and pulled some bananas from a tree, and ate them as he continued his journey. For two weeks he walked through the thick jungle—sometimes being forced to cut a path for himself with his treasured cutlass. When he stopped at a native village he would receive the customary few handfuls of rice given any wayfarer. His hosts wondered when they saw the shiny new cutlass hanging at the giant's side, but something in the stranger's carriage forbade familiarity or questioning.

Late one afternoon he reached the village where he had been born and had lived as the favorite son of the chief until the slavers had come to carry him away with others of his kin. Confidently, he threw back his shoulders and marched erectly past a row of mud huts, roaring:

"It is I, Boatswain, your king, who has returned from the big water. Make ready a great feast of goat and rice, with plenty of palm oil. Let there be a play and all shall dance."

When the kinsman who had ruled in Boatswain's absence saw the giant form and heard the great voice louder than the white man's guns, he came forward to greet the returning lord. They shook hands in the traditional way, each snapping his own middle finger against the palm of his hand at the end of the hand-clasp. That night, while the people gorged themselves with their palm-oil chop and danced until the dawn paled the eastern sky, Boatswain sat on his throne-like chair covered with soft skins, holding his hand firmly on his cutlass, and passing shrewd judgment on his people. This stripling, with training, would make a good soldier; that wizened village elder, a close friend of his father, would be a sage councilor, and those three shapely girls, whose nude breasts

quivered to the rhythm of the drums, would be bargained for in the morning.

By the fool's luck which has preserved the life of that skuldugging little republic, Liberia owes its very existence as a nation to the return of Boatswain from the English schooner. The ghost of that seven-foot monarch, cast in the mold of the Haitians, Toussaint L'Ouverture and Henri Christophe, haunts Liberia until he shall awaken the crumbling little, closed corporation at Monrovia. Whenever the native people discuss politics, the thread of their discussion is: Barclay versus Boatswain. The native tradition of fairness and justice is personified by that uncompromising statesman of the bush against that pompous politician who dares not walk down the streets of his own capital for fear of assassination.

"My great-grandfather ruled according to the Old Law which says that no man may reap unless he puts seeds into the ground. If he plant cassada, he will get cassada; if he plant rice, he will get rice." I was told this by one of my workmen, a descendant of the great Condo king. He, the present Boatswain, stemmed from one of the monarch's sixty children, the offspring of over thirty wives.

"It was like this: I am a very rich man and my son slays the son of a poor man. King Boatswain orders that my son pay with his own life. I go to the king and say:

" 'Oh King, I have much rice and cassada, and all these things with my sheep and my goats and my chickens I give you if my son lives.'

"Then the king would say, 'What is the law?'

"I would have to answer, 'He who slays must also die.'

"Then the king would say, 'That is the law, go! Your son must die.' "

During those years after Boatswain began to rule his people, the roving slave traders learned that here was one African chief who could neither be bought nor frightened. The English captain who had bought him dared not treat him as a slave or assign him to the dirty tasks usually given a bondsman. The big Negro became the mainstay of the ship's boatswain, and thus received the name by which he is remembered in the oral tradition of West Africa. While serving on one English vessel after another, he had acquired a good working knowledge of the white man's language, an uncanny insight into the workings of the

white man's mind, and a burning hatred of slavery which made the traders go in a roundabout way when they came near his territory.

The one man who attempted to treat Boatswain as a slave was the English sea-captain whom the giant Negro broke with his great hands, as if the sailing master were a palm leaf. At the time of his escape from the vessel, he was in his middle thirties, a huge, good-natured man whose easy temper could change to the fury of the Big Wind if any man—white or black—trod on his self-respect. He felt particularly sympathetic toward the Americo-Liberian colonists because, like himself, they or their fathers had known the galling despair of being owned by other men. When he met them in Monrovia, he talked with them about their former lives in America, and tried to show them how they might survive in this fierce new country still claimed by such slave traders as Theodore Canot and the Arab only known as the "Great Bey" on one hand, and hostile native tribes—the Deys, Vais, and Mambas—on the other.

He was carefully polishing his cutlass with sand and oiling it with palm oil one morning—nobody else could touch that symbol of authority—when a native member of the tribe out on a scouting trip breathlessly

returned with an announcement of an entourage approaching the village. Quickly Boatswain buckled on his weapon, and, at the head of his always ready warriors, marched down the village street to greet the newcomers. His tribesmen relaxed when they saw their leader greet his friend, Ba Cara, chief of their kindred tribe, the Bassas.

At dawn the next morning, the warriors of the Condo people marched with the warriors of the Bassa toward the coast—and toward fever-stricken Monrovia. Ba Cara had come to ask aid for the panicky colonists, threatened with wholesale extermination by the Deys and the ferocious Mambas, even as they buried those who had died from the tropical plague, malaria. Until the cocks crowed to arouse the sleeping women in the mud huts—for all the men stayed awake to hear the palaver—the two leaders and their lesser chiefs sat mapping their strategy in a manner that would have done credit to the generals of any great army.

“Hear me good,” said the giant king, “Boatswain makes war on nobody for their herds or the rice from their fields, but Boatswain will make war too much on those who make war without cause.

“There are plenty bad men who sell their brothers

to the white man. The Dey people who sell their brothers want nobody but themselves to sell the black man. That is why they would destroy the people who came across the Big Water. They would kill those who are good with those who are bad like themselves. Are your spears ready, my brothers?"

At the end of a two days' march, the combined armies of Ba Cara and Boatswain swept into the town of the troublemakers. The Deys and the Mambas had not expected a chief like Boatswain to come from the interior to the coast and attack the main village. Tradition says that the battle was fought inch by inch, house by house, until both attackers and defenders lay by the scores in the streets for the hungry dogs to devour. Finally, with the odor of their burning homes choking their nostrils, the headmen of the troublemakers were brought before King Boatswain and his ally, Ba Cara.

"Summon all the people," Boatswain commanded the warriors, who then brought the captive tribe before its conquerors.

Boatswain calmly looked down upon the defeated natives and their families. Then he spoke:

"You have fought well as becomes a people who had yet to be defeated. Boatswain will not take your lives, nor drive your herds back to his village. Boat-

swain will not take your rice nor your cassada. But your headmen, they must die because they broke their oath. They made 'book' to sell land to the American people and to live in peace with them, but they listened to evil men and broke their word."

The Condo chief unsheathed his cutlass. One by one, the shrieking, groveling leaders of the Deys and Mambas were forced to kneel at his feet. As impersonally as if he were killing chickens, he severed the heads from those who had intended the next day to march on the colonists and slaughter every last one of them.

As the bleeding torsos of his enemies were carried away, Boatswain called one of his native runners to him. "Go and tell the people of the colony that they may now rest and sleep," he commanded. "Tell them to notify me if any tribe should again threaten them." As a final word to Deys and Mambas, he said: "Appoint new headmen and live in peace—for next time my anger will be even greater." The next morning, before the sun came up over the hills, he marched back majestically at the head of his followers into the interior.

And that next day all of the colonists celebrated



while the Deys and the Mambas began their lamentation for the dead. The religious element of the colony compared the cutlass of Boatswain to the avenging sword of Gideon. Freed from the menace of the Deys and the Mambas, the colonists began to take on new hope. Soon the fever epidemic abated and new lives were born to replace those that had been destroyed.

The Deys and the Mambas and the Condoes have long since intermarried with the Bassa people, and are now known only as Bassas. They have been placed with the Kru and Grebo tribes in sullen, restless bondage to the descendants of those very Americo-Liberians whom Boatswain saved a hundred years ago. Sometimes I wondered, there in Liberia, if Boatswain's chivalry had not been wasted on those who repaid his generosity with connivance and deceit. If, among all the bribe-taking, double-dealing Liberians, there existed the counterpart of this man who passionately hated dishonesty, the whole sorry account of Liberia might be balanced on the side of democracy. An enlightened statesman—a man who tried to elevate those under him—he is in heroic contrast to that whole shabby processional of presidents whose major interest through the years has been in piling up tidy little fortunes for themselves. For that matter, Boatswain,

who could not write one word, was morally the superior of many of his contemporaries in the courts of Europe—gaudy, overfed martinets who plotted the rape of Africa to serve the emergent monopolies of their day.

While the courts of Europe were fomenting war and dividing up mankind into “spheres” of influence, Boatswain was turning his attention toward developing his people into a peaceful but strong community; provoking nobody and fearing nobody. None of the neighboring tribes dared make war on him, but this security did not lull him into the false confidence felt by our Western democracies at the time that Hitler was planning to lay waste Europe and slaughter one free nation after another. The warriors of Boatswain were always well armed with the best spears and bows his artisans could produce; they were disciplined and ready to become a powerful, merciless fighting force if their country were invaded.

One of his first steps was to establish a strong border patrol which could repel any possible aggressors until his regular army could move to the front. After several skirmishes, the slave expeditions gave his country a wide berth. Before the end of his reign, his was

one of the few tribes of West Africa whose members were never seized and transported like so much cattle from the land of their birth.

His death, according to native legend, was in the same heroic cast as his life. He died of infection, his descendants say, caused while fighting a wild beast he encountered in the forest. I do not know the type of animal which eventually caused his death, but it is believed to have been a leopard. In some unexplained fashion, his beloved cutlass must have failed him in that last fight. Although I questioned scores of natives, in addition to the present-day Boatswain, no one could tell me exactly where he was buried. Needless to say, the few official pamphlets on Liberian history do not mention the name of the greatest Liberian—where he was born, what he did to save the colony, how, and when he died. After all, why should Monrovia want to keep alive the memory of somebody who typified everything which Monrovia has discarded?

But the great folk-heroes are always remembered by the folk—because those heroes transcend and survive printed words. It is not hard to imagine what a Liberian native means when he tells you, as the old king's great-grandson told me:

“Boatswain will rise again and kill the leopard.”

## CHAPTER IX

### *A F R I C A N   C H R I S T M A S*

CHIEF ARKU stepped down from his hammock and insisted that I ride while he walked. "I greet you, my goo-goo [good-good] friend," he said, after I had gotten out of my car with my native entourage to meet the party waiting at the end of the road. Surrounding him were his chief wife and seven younger women whom he maintained in his principal village just outside of Kakata. I did not inquire about the other thirty-odd wives scattered throughout the hinterland, nor did I speak to the women who accompanied him. That would have been an unpardonable breach of etiquette in this country where women are seen, but seldom heard when the chiefs gather.

My friend Arku had the look and dress of a real king as he stood there in the center of lighted, grease-soaked torches carried by men of his tribe. A skilled

Mandingo tailor had embroidered and sewn the regal gown which he wore, draped comfortably over his heavy shoulders. Stitched over the left shoulder of the gray and white garment was his name, "Chief Arku, Paramount Chief." When I looked at him, I thought that this native king would have done credit to any European capital, and certainly to Monrovia, whose politicians strut pompously and uncomfortably in formal European clothes several sizes too small or too large as the case may be. This native chief was not dependent for his authority upon bribery and ballot-stuffing; he ruled naturally and honestly as became a proud man who came from a proud people.

Before that Christmas Eve was over, Arku and I were to become brothers by sacred adoption rites of the Buzzi people. I have never had any flair for politics even in my own country; in fact, I will always make myself scarce when political discussions arise, but that night, without asking it and by solemn decision of the Buzzi people, I was to become the one and only white chief of their tribe. From that time on, Arku and I would be considered by every native in Liberia as kinsmen by blood, each bound with his life to protect his brother and his brother's people. Today, I am counted as being one of the Buzzi. A week before,

Arku's talking-chief had walked about twelve miles to bring me a letter from the Paramount Chief. A native runner, bearing two chickens as a gift, walked closely behind my visitor.

"Boss Hayman," the letter read, "I greet you. You must come Christmas Eve-Time to my town where we make you white chief of Buzzi tribe. You must give small book to my talking chief for me to say, you agree.

"Chief Arku, P. C."

I sent back the "book"—a note to my friend, whose tribesmen worked for me at the hydro-electric plant we were building—informing him that I would be there. Here I stood, on this Christmas Eve of 1941, the honor guest of the strangest Christmas festival in my life. The lack of snow or fir trees with their elaborate lighting effects was made up by the abundance of brotherly love and the ever-present palm trees.

I was placed in the hammock and the bearers picked it up and started moving to the village two miles away. The native drummers, following in the rear, began beating their tomtoms in a wild rhythmic tune, the Buzzi counterpart of "Hail the New Chief." The other natives began chanting words, made up as they went along, declaring I was magnanimous, courageous, and

the most virtuous of all the white men, and that the gods had sent me as a special protector of the Buzzi people. As they sang, they whirled around in circles, leaping high into the air, and causing the night-birds to cry shrilly and fly away in terror.

Arku, walking on my right side, joined in the singing, his body swaying to the time of the drums. As the rhythm grew louder, he increased his swaying until suddenly he was inspired to break into one of the most graceful dances I have ever seen. Never out of step, he leaped high, twisting his body as he came down, cutting the most intricate steps.

The "boss-wife" attended me on my left, and behind her walked my faithful attendant, Small Sam, who had painstakingly taught me the Buzzi formalities as well as the language. Sam Hayman, he had already renamed himself, and that is the name by which he is known at the Booker T. Washington Mission School where I enrolled him before leaving Liberia. Sixteen-year-old Sam was always on hand to do "proper things to please Boss." Now with my adoption into the tribe, I would become more than just his boss, who treated him kindly and paid him his wages regularly. Just as I had become Arku's brother chief, so I would become Small Sam's "Country Father."

The pace of the caravan increased as the music reached a quicker tempo that expressed all the untamed fury as well as the unstinted hospitality of the West African native. The hammock bearers moved in long, swift, graceful strides across the jungle path which branches out at the end of the road. Breathing heavily, the fat chief wife ran beside me, wiping my face time and time again with a dirty rag whose odor caused my American nostrils to wrinkle. But, after all, I could not protest this supreme honor of being wiped with a rag which belonged to the first wife of the Chief of all the Buzzis.

"Ungar! Yarnar!" Three hundred native voices yelled in greeting to me when I arrived at the entrance of the village. "Boy-Ungar!" I shouted back at them. Then man, woman, and child, they broke into a throbbing chant of welcome as I was carried into the wide open space that was the center of the circular-shaped village. The bearers stopped in front of a semicircle of chairs at the far side of the town center, and there I dismounted, seating myself next to my friend, Paramount Chief Arku.

That was the signal for the big dance to begin. The drums started with a roll and settled down to a throbbing beat. Every step of that intricate, tribal dance



was accompanied by a collective shout until the bedlam of voices rang for miles and reverberated from the jungle. As they whirled and leaped, the dancers managed somehow to descend near the table in front of the chairs, helping themselves to the cane juice which had been placed in five-gallon discarded Coca-Cola jugs by the side of the American beer which I had brought.

The beer was untouched—the subjects of the chief must not touch his private stock. Each dancer would pick up the jug, leap high into the air, take a swallow before he came down, and replace the container on the table without having spilled a drop.

The leader of the dance stood in front of me. "You must now dance wid de people," he said. I arose from my chair as he took my right hand and led me into the circle of dancing men. Another native quickly took my left hand and I felt myself being swung and practically dragged in a circle of dancers who, locked hand to hand, whirled around as dizzily as the tops I had spun in my boyhood.

After ten minutes of this, I was led back with a reeling head and unsteady feet to my chair. As the night air still rang with the shouts of approval for my

performance, the country devil, mounted on stilts some fifteen feet high and accompanied by his talking devil, greeted me indirectly through the words of his vocal minister.

The hidden face behind that grotesque wooden mask could have ordered me poisoned or knifed had I incurred the enmity of the Buzzi people. But now its owner was helping me to be initiated into his tribe. I could not help but contrast the grass skirt which he wore this Christmas Eve with the conventional red suits of the Santa Clauses back home. I wondered what hard-driving force—the force of a continent awaking like a giant volcano into a giant eruption—lay beneath that hand heavily wrapped in country cloth which extended from his shoulders in a long fold over the black, hidden hand. It would not be permitted for the country devil to carry on a direct conversation with me. Instead he spoke first to his talking devil who relayed the message to me.

“Ungar” [greetings], said the country devil.

“Boy-Ungar” [Friend, I greet you], I replied.

“Issivani pagai?” [Are you keeping good?] the devil asked politely.

“Pagai” [good].

“Pagai-pagai” [very good].

After a forty-five-minute talk, with the natives listening very intently, the country devil concluded in words which translated into English mean:

“Good friend, it is good for us that tonight on Christmas Eve we make you a chief. We do this to show you that you are better than anyone. And because you have helped all the black people, we call you the true Black Man’s Friend. You are now Chief Arku the Second, the White Chief of the Buzzi people.”

After the devil had praised me in no uncertain terms, two natives appeared before Arku, one carrying a dark blue-and-white, striped, flowing gown of a chief, while the other carried a beautiful, long brass knife, with an ivory and rosewood handle.

The knife and gown were handed to Arku, who by this time was quietly sitting on his chairlike throne. As I stood up, Arku placed the gown over my shoulders and tied the knife around my waist with a leather cord. Then he said in English, “You are my white brother chief. We have make you brother chief because you be proper white man past any white man. While you stay here in dis country you never steal from de black man. You have help all de Buzzi people. When dey be sick, you make dem well. When dey

have de Missy palaver, you judge dem proper and de people listen one time. So you have help de Buzzi people past anybody and all in the country dey love you proper. Now you be Buzzi chief. Dis tribe be your tribe. When you need de chop [food] part de Buzzi people dey feed you. When you need de woman part, dey bring de woman to you. When you have de palaver [trouble] dey come dey help you. All dese things will make your heart be satisfy. Now, you be proper brother."

The natives cheered and the drums rolled again. When the natives had settled down to listen to my speech, I replied:

"My heart be satisfy past anything. Dese people are now my true brothers and I will always help them and understand them."

The natives clapped their hands and some jumped into the air in glee. Then they all made way for the dance of the chiefs. Again I was called on to cut some capers. Once more the drums started a slow beat for the dance. It was measured and deliberate at first, but as the tom-toms increased their tempo, it became wild and frenzied. Not a native laughed as I stumbled awkwardly through the ceremony—even when I did a shuffling imitation of an American Indian war dance

in an effort to at least show my good intentions—no matter how stilted in interpretation.

After the dance was finished, I gratefully retired to my chair with my fellow chiefs. Then the country devil appeared for his dance.

I think any American showman would have offered that tribal priest his own price to come to this country and perform on a stage. Keeping a perfect balance at all times, this devil-devil man waltzed, spun, and gyrated—always in step to the beat of the tom-tom—on his fifteen-foot-high stilts. Twice he jumped into the air and turned a somersault, landing on those stilts as gracefully as a bird lighting on the limb of a tree. After the final somersault, he disappeared into the darkness behind the huts, where he probably removed his ceremonial clothes and returned in ordinary costume to share in the feast that followed.

The men took fresh draughts of cane juice, and the leader of the native dance came forward and offered me a drink. This I could not refuse. I took a drink and swallowed the fiery liquid. The sensations of that swallow may be compared to kissing the spark-plug of a racing motor. While I was recovering from the effects of the cane juice, the chiefs were helping themselves

to the beer, while the women served the country chop on long tables. It was not a Christmas turkey, and I wasn't at home, but I have never enjoyed anything more than that succulent chop—made with chickens stewed in "ground-pea" (peanut) sauce, peppers, rice, palm-oil sauce, cocoanut, bananas, potato-greens, and plenty of rice.

We had been feasting far into the night when we were conscious of someone near us.

"Hic, hic, foolish people, foolish people." I looked up and saw, drunk as the proverbial lord, one of those small-time Liberian politicians. He was on his way to the Christmas Eve dance of the Americo-Liberian aristocracy to be held at the town hall in Kakata, and it was quite evident that he had gotten himself off to a good start on the drinking before he had left his home.

Americo-Liberians are not always welcome at native festivals—they are sometimes insulting when they come to one of the villages. Hoping that he would finally stumble out of the town as he had stumbled in, the natives ignored him, offering him no food and treating with cold contempt his insulting jibes.

The intruder was determined to break up this feast of people whom he regarded in the same light as he did

the monkeys out in the bush. He went over to a group of dancers and criticized their antics, always ending with, "You foolish people."

The beaming face of Chief Arku had become somber and hurt, and, as the stupid intruder continued, Arku's face took on a coldly vicious look. He went over to the politician and said:

"You go just now. Dis be happy time. You must not spoil."

The other waved his hand with drunken grandeur. "I'll stay as long as I please," he said. "No foolish bush people will tell a gentleman when and where to go."

Two of the tribe stepped forward and Arku spoke quietly to them. They took the politician by the arms and led him firmly but quietly out of the village. When the interloper felt the clutch of the strong hands, he stopped talking.

About five o'clock the next morning, he was found unconscious on the outskirts of the town. His face was badly swollen and bruised, and there was a knife wound in his back. His blood had dyed the once immaculate white jacket a soggy red.

## CHAPTER X

### *D E V I L   B U S H   P E O P L E*

HIGH OVER Giibii Mountain, the sharp-beaked vultures fly waiting for the Golas to have done with their kill. When the heart of the victim has been torn out and eaten by the chief country devil, the scavenger birds descend upon the bloody altar to gorge themselves until the next sacrifice to the Gola law shall be brought to the mountain top as an offering to death.

Sometimes I think that the vultures are the real gods of Liberia, because it is they who finally devour each tortured offering to the weird spirits whose names may not be pronounced by any but the devils. By the same token, the devils are the priests of the vultures rather than those nameless gods who dwell in nothing, because they are nothing. What heinous compact, what secret language, told by priest to priest during these countless generations of the Gola people, exist between



the devils living in their mud huts and the vultures nesting in the forbidden heights of Mount Giibii? They each hold the white man in lordly contempt of the ancients, knowing—through their combined magic of the knife and the beak—that both together may outlive this intruder who came only yesterday and will be gone tomorrow. For the vultures and the devils are the joint symbols of that implacable hatred so intensely felt by the Golas for the white man that few of our proscribed color ever cross their country. Only the vultures and their lordly native servants in human form know how many wandering whites have been surrounded at the jungle water-holes, captured by this tribe, and carried off to Giibii Mountain as expiation for all the sins of the white man against this continent, Africa, which still moves to the rhythm of old, forgotten wars or other wars yet to come.

The Golas, alone of all the Liberian tribes, hate the white man, but all of the tribes live in deadly fear of their country devils whose power is such that they could command them to massacre either the whites or the Americo-Liberians.

When a native child has reached the age of eight, he is covered from head to foot with ashes ground to fine dust. This is a sign to the roving agents of the

country devil that the child is ready to begin service to this bush monarch of from one to three years—depending on the tribe. On a dark night, when the eyes of the people of the village are discreetly turned in the opposite direction, the agents make their entrance, silently rounding up the children marked with ashes. There are no farewells between the children and parents—neither do parents grieve for their kidnaped sons and daughters when the hot sun rises over the village now robbed of a part of the younger population.

The kidnaping is the end of childhood in Liberia, for an individual in that country—where the broiling tropical heat of the dry season and the chilling dampness of the rainy season ripen people like trees—ages before his time. Once the child has been taken into the bush, he enters into life-long subjection to the country devil and to his tribal chiefs—unless the chief himself flouts the devil and is condemned to die by the people of Giibii Mountain. Those people, who live by the sacred law of the devil-devil people, keep to themselves in the lonely mountain, and very little is known of their rites. We do know, however, that all children are circumcised after they are in the devil's community for a short time.

The child is circumcised without much consideration for the fact that he is sensitive to pain. The Jewish rite of circumcision is performed when the male child is only eight or nine days old in order that he will be less sensitive to pain, while female Jewish children are entirely exempt. Yet in Liberia, the circumcision—although it seems sadistic—is not really meant to be so. The lack of proper medical knowledge in the bush has forced the people to put off the operation until the child is old enough to have a better chance to recover from possible infection. Neither sex in Liberia is exempt from this rite. The clitoris of the little girl is cut off so that she will not derive any satisfaction from sexual intercourse when she has been sold to a man. The tribal chiefs, some of them fanatical adherents of the devil law because it also maintains their regime, insist that the removal of the clitoris is intended only as a precaution for the future safety of the whole group. If women are impassive in the physical act, they declare, men will desire them less, and there will be a minimum of the very troublesome “missy palaver” to disturb the villages. For the sexual pattern of village life rarely departs from the norms which have been prescribed out in the forbidden stretches of the devil’s bush.

The devil's bush consists of a taboo piece of land completely hidden by thick bushes. Its entrance is only a small hole through which the devil people crawl on hands and knees. The girls and boys taken there do not go to the same bush, for each sex is kept entirely ignorant of the other's rites. During the girl's stay in the bush, she is taught to accept the subordinate position prescribed her in the tribe—although she does not always maintain that position. If she becomes just an ordinary tribesman's wife, it will not be unusual in later years to hear her humbugging her spouse for some bauble or piece of cloth.

The man-child, on the other hand, learns that he is the superior, and during his stay with the devil people he is instructed in all tribal lore and customs. He learns by heart songs of his people and of the legendary chiefs who became tribal gods after fathering their people. I have always believed, too, that the boys are there taught how to circumvent both white men and the Americo-Liberian by half-answers and half-truths. Although I could never prove that conviction, I have never been convinced that lying is an inborn trait of the native. My personal boy, Small Sam, was sixteen years old and had been lucky enough to escape the devil bush people. He told me that he did not

believe in the need to spend that time—three years—learning things which could be taught him in three months in a civilized school. And as I have said repeatedly, that little Buzzi boy was the last word in honesty—I can safely say that during the year he was in my employ, I never once was forced to question the veracity of any of his statements. There was never a shilling missing from my money bag—and it was he who saw to that. I can confidently say that Small Sam would have guarded with his life any of my possessions, were they in danger of being stolen.

But all of Sam's many brothers had served their apprenticeship in the bush. They had gone through the final initiation rites of manhood which admitted them to full membership in the tribe. Those rites may seem cruel and exacting, but we must remember that almost every people observes some form of what anthropologists call the pubic ceremonies, marking the transition from childhood to manhood.

When the Liberian boy has come to the age when tribal custom no longer recognizes him as a child, he is released by the country devil and sent home. But first the devil must perform over him the immemorial ceremonies which have inducted thousands of native Liberians into the responsibilities of men. The boy is

again covered with ashes. Upon his head is placed a cap of heavy country cloth, thickly fringed at the edge so that the tassels hang down over his eyes. He returns home to his town, and, until he is washed by the devil, he may not enter the house of his family, but must eat and live near-by. The washing usually takes place about ten days to two weeks after his return, when the devil makes his regular rounds. After the cleansing, there is much dancing and drinking, for the boy is now a man and may do as he wishes.

After the boy has returned to his people, he swaggers around boastfully in the glory of his manhood, much as a youth in our country does when he has put on his first pair of long trousers. From that time on, in native dialect, he is "Johnnie"—because he has served his time, and is now a full-fledged man of the tribe. If one lad offends the dignity of another, he usually hears the proud reply, "I be Johnnie"—which may be translated into our own language as, "I am a man, and must be treated so." There are some young men like Small Sam who are brought up in mission schools or outside the limits of the tribe. These sometimes escape the apprenticeship necessary to become "Johnnie," but if they should move back into the bush and be captured by a country devil, they would be

treated somewhat in the manner of an escaped convict, and would have to labor long and hard during years spent with the bush devil. And once such are captured, they never attempt to escape because of their fear of the devil-people law.

The country devil travels unseen, and his coming is never announced more than a few minutes before his entrance into a village. In the constant game of tag which the natives play with him, he may not be looked upon without danger to those who see him.

I remember one Saturday night up-country at my hunting camp. I was being entertained by Chief Mussa and his dancers from a neighboring village. In the distance I heard tom-toms and the weird cry of a native horn. A few minutes later a runner came through my camp announcing the coming of the devil people. Like a flash the children, who had gathered to watch the play, scampered for their huts where their people closed and locked the doors and windows. I was quickly instructed to have my personal boys turn the camp lights low, and I was not to look in the direction of the trail. My boy Sam shivered and huddled close to me, and although he remained silent, he pleaded with eloquent eyes for me to save him from the devil man. My hand slipped to the butt of my revolver, and

I waited for whatever might come—for this was my first experience with the Liberian devil people. Like a rush of the October wind and the rustle of leaves, the devil people passed by, tapping their drums with light fingers. And as suddenly it was all over. They were gone, and only the swirls of dust were witnesses that someone had passed down the jungle trail.

When the devil's herald comes through a village, the natives wandering near the bush hear the commotion and scurry like squirrels into the highest branches, where they hide their faces and contract their bodies into taut knots until the drums of the devil's procession become fainter in the distance—the sign that he has passed.

Generally the devil's visits are profitable to him, since the family of any captured native must pay for his support and give the devil money, cloth, chickens, or rice as a tribute. This is all in addition to the weekly gifts which must be faithfully carried to the entrance of the devil bush.

Of course the chiefs are in league with the devils, because they realize that if the natives stopped believing in the power of their spiritual rulers they might begin flouting their temporal rulers as well. The devil-law is the highest law in Liberia. I believe that



any absolutism must always have a corresponding superstition believed in by the mass of people to sustain itself. But the sure retribution visited upon an ordinary native for offending a devil is doubly inflicted upon any chief who insults one of these rapacious bush priests.

I attended a council of the chiefs up in Borlala. This council was made up of the paramount chiefs of the Bassa tribe who had gathered together for the trial of another paramount chief accused of a direct offense—although it really was not a direct offense—against the country devil. He had failed to hold in captivity another chief who had stolen the devil's drum. That was a grave crime in itself, but to make matters worse, the chief had become drunk, had called his wives around him, and had then ordered them to dance while he made music on the sacred drum.

Now it is the law, sanctioned by centuries of tradition, that no woman may look upon the country devil's ceremonial drum. That was the second crime of the chief: actually giving them a position of equality with men by letting them hear the language of the drum. The third crime was the fact that the chief, in his enthusiastic performance, broke the consecrated skin of

the drum, and had then thrown the wrecked instrument into the bush where evil spirits might nest in it, coming out at night to harm the people. If the skin of a devil-drum is ever broken while the devil people are using the drum, it is quickly taken into the bush and instantly repaired there where no one can see the work.

Soon the country devil had located the missing drum and immediately suspected a particular chief who had, in the past, shown him only bare courtesy, while other rulers, of course, had fawned upon him and sent him choice delicacies. When the guilty chief saw the devil come down the jungle path, he ran to his house and brought out his old-fashioned shotgun. Without much ado, he leveled it in the general direction of the devil and pulled the trigger. That he did not kill or at least wound the devil is probably only due to the fact that he was too drunk to aim carefully. Suddenly realizing the seriousness of his fourth crime, the chief took to his heels, hiding in the bush. After several days of intense search the devil and his people cornered the chief, and took him into custody. Sentence was almost instantly passed: the culprit was to be taken to Giibii Mountain and executed according

to the tribal rites. He was given in charge of another chief to be held until the hour of execution, but somehow he managed to escape and was never seen again. There remained only one way to appease the wrath of the devil, and that was to punish the chief who had been lax in his duty to the devil.

I was allowed to look on at the trial of the second chief only because I happened to be a guest of the Liberian District Commissioner, who sat in at the proceedings at the request of the government—although he had been told not to interfere. A few minutes after I had been escorted into the palaver house where the trial was being held, I was hustled right out. Although I was permitted to take a few pictures, I was not permitted to hear any of the testimony presented against the accused, lest I might intervene and cause trouble.

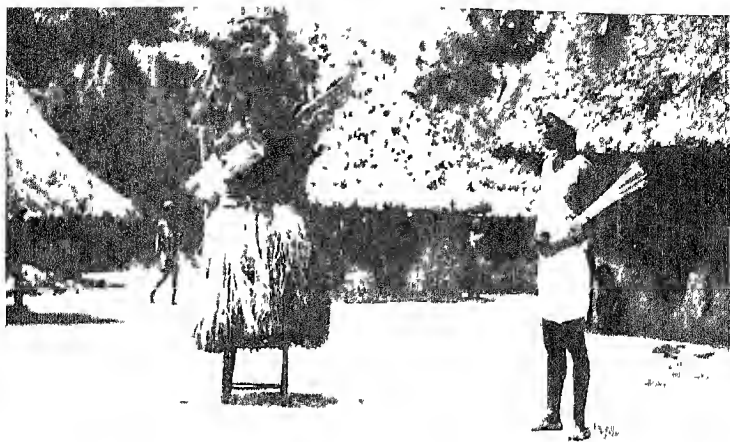
I have never seen a more stoical figure than that native on trial. He and the other chiefs sat in an enclosure which gave to the whole place an uncanny resemblance to an American courtroom. Just below, on the dirt floor, sat the people, happy that the anger of the devil would be satisfied, and remaining quiet for fear the devil might take reprisals once they returned home. I was not allowed to see the execution chamber, which was taboo to all white people.

Frankly I do not think I would have been able to watch the torture of that chief. I have seen many men die, but cleanly and quickly, without protest, though painfully and silently. I do not know how he was put to death, but if the method resembled the stories told me by some of the natives, I am sure that it was not a pretty sight. There was no possible chance of the judges finding the chief "not guilty"—for the devil must be served. And I wondered, as I left for my own camp, what thoughts must have passed through the chief's mind every day of that two weeks' trial which was only so much ritual—the two weeks that passed before the day he knew that he would be sentenced, and led to the mountain fastness of lonely Giibii.

## CHAPTER XI

# MONTH OF THE DEVIL

IT WAS December—the Devil Month—when the drums were thundering all day and night out in the bush. Hour after hour, I listened to the throbbing rhythms being pounded out by the musicians of the country devil in hidden places far back in the jungles. The drums of the villages, too, were celebrating this month when the country devils come down from the hinterland to carry off native children into the bush for their three-year initiation. That night I had seen an assistant to one of the devils herding a group of children into the bush; the assistant had quickly disappeared with his captives, when he had seen me on that outlying section of the plantation. The drums mocked me on all sides as I went back to my house—I heard their shrill laughter step after step before I had entered my door and poured myself a drink. The



*Country devil dancing on chain*

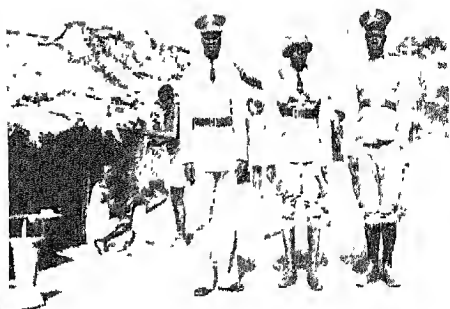
*It's a sad life—  
the author's twin pets*



*Tapping rubber tree*



*Morning day*



*Author's guardians of the peace*

*Building native huts*



white man's voice might command and threaten when ditches were to be dug or rocks to be broken. But the voice of the drums dominated the black night, and the language of the drums made the feeble voice of the white man sound like the chirruping of a bird.

We had strict instructions not to interfere with the devils when they came on the plantations to seize the children. If we had tried to interfere with this traditional prerogative of the priests, the drums would have thundered at us in a fury of hatred that would have ruined our relationship with our workers. Had we interfered the men next day would have been sullen and morose, doing their work half-heartedly and muttering native curses against the boss when his back was turned. Even the parents of the children whom we had tried to protect would have resented our intrusion, and would have joined with the drums in calling down the vengeance of the Liberian gods upon us. For the drums are triumph and judgment, passion and hatred, the dark brooding soul of Africa welling up beyond the bounds of consciousness into a torrent of exultation and rage. No white man need try to breast that torrent or to understand the force with which it sweeps over the minds of the kindly, good-natured tribes.

Drums are as old as man out here in this land where



the drums, unlike men, have never admitted defeat. How many old, dead wars, I wondered during that month of December, were fought again in the fierce, deadly rhythms that came from those oval shells; how many old chiefs, proud conquerors centuries before Tamerlane and Genghis Khan, walked again through the bush, phantom generals leading phantom armies in a country that was beginning to seem like a phantom? Not even a schoolboy fears the conquerors who have been recorded in our written history. But I would have been no more surprised to have seen King Boatswain, appearing before me as the drums tapped out their potent, unwritten history, than I was surprised to see the fantastic country devils prowling around on the property of one of the world's richest monopolies.

"Boss, you make no talk when the drums beat come next month," my overseer, Boatswain, had warned me. He had never been more regal in his bearing than at that moment, and his voice had a majesty which made me fancy that, in the inscrutable mysteries of Africa, I had the Old King reincarnated on my payroll.

"Dat not be your part," he had said firmly but courteously. "Dat be part of de people. Dey want to eat and dance and drink. Come de month after Devil Month, and dey work good again." I swear that his

voice had the subdued pitch of a drum as he spoke.

During the Devil Month, I wondered what strange impulse, transmitted from the cosmos itself, makes all peoples restless and festive at the end of the year. Anthropologists have explained the phenomenon by the winter solstice which occurs on December 21, marking the end of one year and the beginning of another. Then the days grow shorter until the summer solstice, six months later, leaving less of the precious daylight, and bringing more of the darkness with its desperate, unspoken fears that tear at the heart of man. Let him then renew his courage for the months ahead by feasting, by dancing, and with the drums. Yes, and even we Caucasians are under the eternal spell of the drums. Do we not give drums to our small boys at Christmas, thus unconsciously paying homage to some dim racial memory when our own ancestors listened and trembled before the sound of those hidden instruments in the forests?

The beating of the drums in the plantation villages, during that haunted Month of the Devil, is a barrage of defiance against unseen, nameless evils as well as a pæan of thanksgiving for all the good things that had come to them during the past year. Man both worships and defies his gods—for without defiance there could

be no worship. I hoped that my name was being tapped out in complimentary terms to those unknown guardians of the bush people. For the gods of the bush are fierce nationalists, taking their own secret revenge upon those who harm their people. To those who befriend the people, they are at least tolerant and sometimes even helpful, having been known, through the drums of their priests, to guide lost white men out of the jungles. But the gods themselves also have their own drums beating across the skies—and the thunder is a sign that the gods are pounding their drums in anger at the transgressions of their puny children below. But the protecting magic of the village drums would not have guarded any native who strayed from his hut at night during that Month of the Devil. Farther out on the plantations, the drums of the devils themselves were beating—and those were drums whose songs had been given to the first country devils, centuries ago, when the gods had visited the earth and left with their priests the laws by which the people lived. These visits were repeated each year to the devils camped on the edge of the villages. If a man looks upon a devil at any ordinary time of the year, he may be released on payment of a small fine. But if he looks upon a devil when he is conversing with a

god, the man will be stricken with a pain which makes the bite of the deadly cassada snake seem like the sting of a mosquito. Then the man shrivels and shrivels until he changes into a speck of dirt on the profaned ground.

They huddled together in the villages as the constant roar of the drums became a continuous weird symphony which made the leaves quiver on the trees. They feasted on bigger and bigger portions of country chop as, day by day, the children, due for their apprenticeship in the bush, disappeared from the huts. The natives became bleary and boastful from gallon after gallon of cane juice. But never once, as they bragged of their prowess on the hunt or in sex, did they ever say anything disrespectful about the country devils who have their spies planted in every community and in every work gang.

The gods and the devils may be defied with thoughts but never with words. The gods and the devils may pardon what lies unsaid in a man's heart. They can never forgive what might accidentally slip from a man's tongue. If a man must boast, let him tell how he "rogued" his boss. And let him get drunk before the earth claims him into the still, impersonal embrace which will finally reduce him to a piece of the soil.

The gods who live forever can be compassionate toward the foibles of these transient ones whose existence is a convulsion between the dark matrix of birth and the long silence of death.

For drunkenness at the festal season is a form of orthodoxy, of adherence to that severe theology which requires that everything African continue to be done as it has been done during these endless millenniums while we of the white skin were absorbing new creeds and cults, sold to us with the high-powered promotion of new patent medicines.

Jacob No. 1, the best musician on the plantation, sat in front of his hut, drinking uncounted draughts of cane juice that would have killed any white man, with his dyspeptic stomach inherited from what we call "civilization." The drinking was a part of the ritual dance which he beat out with pointed, ornamented sticks on a small cottonwood drum shaped like a vase. Near him sat Small Joe, pounding on his hands with a larger drum consisting of a wooden frame and a goatskin top. A third man rattled a gourd which had been polished with the juice of some native berry before it had been made fit for the ceremonies which it would accompany. The musicians greeted me

pleasantly, even though their eyes showed the effects of the drink and of the drums. I knew that they would have preferred to have had me stay in my own house during these evenings of the Devil Month. But I had been a good Boss, and I was not to be mistreated so long as I merely looked and did not interfere.

The music and the twisting, writhing dance were meant to assure the gods that the people of the tribes still walked in the old ways and kept the old laws; the heady shouts from the dancers were as much prayers as they were sheer good spirits.

Some of the rhythms seemed oddly familiar to me. Then I remembered having heard them, modified, of course, by a new environment, in Harlem night-spots. The American Negro has kept much, much of the traditional culture of his forebears, brought here as slaves; far more, in fact, than he has cared to reveal to his overbearing white neighbors. Lydia Parrish, in her *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands*, has revealed how Negroes living in that little-known country off the Atlantic coast sang to her songs in African dialects once they had come to trust her. Jazz was the musical phenomenon of the twenties and swing of the thirties, but they were no recent combinations of chords and rhythms. They were parts of the secret

African heritage of millions of Americans who, living among us as cooks and farmhands, kept alive a culture far older than our sickly one, with its pallid composers and its narcissistic poets.

I was witnessing the birth of jazz as I strolled, uninvited, into the native village. I was hearing that wild tonal pattern which seems so formless to oversensitive ears, but which is actually the tumultuous form of a people who have never developed the collective neuroses of the governing races—neuroses which express themselves in minute and exacting criticism of technicalities. The music might be harsh, but life itself is harsh. We protect ourselves from harshness by making everything “pretty.” But the native, ignorant of all the technical verbiage of art, accepts harshness and incorporates it naturally and joyously into his cultural forms.

The night was waning when I left the village, but I could still hear the devil drums, beating out in the bush, as I undressed. Then I understood something which had been shaping in my mind as I listened to Small Joe and Jacob No. 1. If the dollar is the universal language of the white man, the drum is the universal language of the black man. The drums beat in Georgia and Haiti, as they beat in Liberia and Kenya.

They cannot be silenced in this day of freedom, because their message is greater in a time when the people of the drum scattered throughout the world are joining hands for the future.

I am writing this chapter in another December a year later. Last night, I went to a Harlem club and I wondered if the maddening pulse, beaten out by the trap drummer in his orchestra, was not an answer to the drums beating again in Liberia.



## CHAPTER XII

### WORDS ARE WEAPONS

THE MAN with the strangely Oriental features who came to me for a job fascinated me. A Buddha done in black, he reminded me of statues of the great Gautama I had seen outside of temples in China. I wondered if the Buddha had, in one of his earthly incarnations, wandered down to Liberia and, in the general scheme of his cosmos, mixed his seed with that of some laughing Kru girl, whose lithe hips might tempt even an ascetic god to the human sins of the flesh.

He talked to me in precise English as he gave his name, Robert Brown. He had gone to the College of West Africa in Monrovia for two years; he was, so he said, skilled in the use of the hammer and the saw. I needed a head carpenter so I hired him for two shillings a day: princely wages for that country with

its coolie scale of labor pay. He thanked me, and started toward the place where the carpenters were working. Then he came back and asked politely:

"I wonder, sir, if you have a dictionary that you could give me? I am going through a severe crisis for the lack of literature with which to improve my speech." Strangely, I didn't laugh at him. He was just trying to lift himself above a place where most of his brethren were chained by the leaders of the country. Brown's affected English was simply the key with which he was trying to unlock doors that have been hermetically sealed against those with certain types of faces, whatever the qualities of their hearts and minds.

I was glad I had brought a small dictionary from America and when I went home for my noon meal, I put it in my pocket and presented it to Brown upon my return to the job. His bland face lighted up as he took the five-and-ten-cent-store copy, and fumbled through a few of the pages. The bold printed words had the same gladdening appeal to him as stumbling on a layer of diamonds in the bush would have for me. This man must have long since ceased to believe in the magic of the country devils, but the magic of words had settled upon him with all the imperious,

restless dissatisfaction words inflict upon their servants. Words seemed to mean more to him than his rice or the three wives he kept at his hut. I felt very pleased with the man who, giving me a sweeping bow, walked out the door toward his job. I am satisfied that words spoken by Robert Brown, his Kru tribal brother, John Collins, and other natives who managed to get a little education, will be the most forceful weapons in the gathering resentment which spells ultimate doom for the present type of administration.

Back in Liberia, John Collins' keen mind is framing the sharp-edged words of destruction which fall upon the ears of the natives like the impregnating Liberian rain upon the waiting, fertile earth. That minority of politically conscious natives who attended mission schools are the leaven of that very harsh little autocracy which calls itself a republic. If they are encouraged by the liberal forces in the Western democracies, they will have no trouble in establishing a new, real democracy there in Africa. The present administration may own the seals of state and the rusty, useless cannon which are the outward apparatus of that nation. Robert Brown and John Collins and others like them have the faith and confidence of their tribes: those sleeping volcanoes easily touched off

into a political explosion by the present offensive of the United Nations in Africa.

John Collins was the first native who had ever discussed his country's politics with me. It all began after I had given him some three-month old copies of the *New York Times*. He read every line of the news items in those yellowed editions, asking me questions about the events he saw reported. I explained to him the alignments during that second year of war, and how Hitler's legions had reduced one free people after another to the status of the Liberian tribes under the present rule in Monrovia. I was fascinated when I watched the consciousness of this man grow while I talked. Britain, France, Germany—names remembered from his geography in the mission—becoming places where men were engaged in settling a titanic issue that would have to be solved, as well, out here in the bush.

"I am glad you came to Liberia, Boss," he told me. "Your newspapers and your talk have made me understand what I must do. When I was going to the College of West Africa I was told that the government really had the interests of my people at heart, that they would some day, through education and religion, bring the tribes up to the level of the Americo-

Liberians. Some of us believed it at the time. After my time in college, I was unable to get what is called a gentleman's job in this country. I became a laborer with my hands just the same as if I still ran and hid whenever a bolt of lightning struck close to me. Of course, there is one native in the cabinet; he did what he was told to do, never asking questions when he went to school. To satisfy the other countries which were complaining about the slave traffic, the government put him in the cabinet as proof we natives are represented—but that is all for show.”

Collins looked away; then he took up a small stick and began drawing criss-cross patterns on the ground. “I am a gang foreman and not a politician,” he said. “But if I were in the President’s place, I would call together the heads of all the tribes and I would admit that bad mistakes were made. I would tell them we will try to correct those mistakes for we shall work together.

“The Americo-Liberians would not like that, but the rest of the people would make them look like a puff of dust in the wind. Then I would say to the headmen, ‘Go back to your tribes and build houses where your children may be schooled. We will get money and teachers from our American friends, for

they will always help us. Call your people and cut roads through the forests, so that your people may travel to buy and sell. Make the country devils earn their living by work, and do not permit any boy or girl to be carried off to the bush to serve them.' All this would I make come to pass."

Then I understood why Monrovia found it necessary to disfranchise not only the natives of the bush, but also natives with education. Given the ballot and the right of representation in national legislature, the people of the tribes would send their educated leaders to speak for them in Monrovia. The effect upon that private parliament of the clique would be the same as if some anti-Nazi were accidentally chosen to sit in Hitler's Reichstag. Men like Collins and Brown might not be able to get any actual legislation passed in those mock sessions which always have a dress rehearsal in the Mansion, but when they spoke in the chambers of the legislature, all Liberia would be listening, and all Liberia would join to enact through sheer force of numbers the measures of reform otherwise contemptuously tossed into the ash-heap.

If men like those two had any official standing, the whole narrow policy of the Liberian government toward the white man would be considerably modified.

"I think it is foolish," the twenty-five-year-old Collins told me, "for the government to take such a stupid attitude toward the general mass of the white people. Of course they don't do it because they love us black men any better than they love the whites; it's only to hold power themselves. It's also a shame for the Americo-Liberians to forget why they came here, and it is terrible to make slaves out of the native tribes who befriended them."

Collins finished his drawings in the sand and stood up, *stretching proudly erect*. "I will tell you something, Boss," he concluded. "The proudest eagle dies on its own rocks or is finally brought down by the hunter. My people are talking—and waiting. They talk much, but wait little. . . ."

I was hearing the sentence of death pronounced on the regime at Monrovia—delivered in the words of a proud man who has deliberated long, and knows unswervingly what must be done. Despots are always the blindest of rulers, feasting and blustering until the last moment when their outraged subjects break down their doors and send them either to death or exile. The rulers of Libcria are no exception; they will heed not even the warnings which are coming increasingly from the bush.

Men like Collins and Brown are not to be taken

lightly today by the rough little fuehrers of any color. When Collins spoke to me, I knew that he was expressing not simply a personal resentment and a personal conviction. All the restless ghosts of generations of Kru rebels were stirring in his mind; all of their forgotten battle cries, when his forefathers had marched down on Monrovia with spear and bow, had been translated through their son into the alien tongue of the white man, finding new meanings in a day when the hope of freedom is becoming as strong in the huts and the camps as in the quiet, orderly cottages of occupied Norway and Belgium.

Collins carries the personal prestige of belonging to an outstanding Kru family. His grandfather was one of the leaders of the Fourth Kru Rebellion against the Liberian government in 1898. "The people in Monrovia don't care how the bush people live so long as they make money," the old chief had told his warriors when he assembled them in the village streets. "We gave their fathers bread and they give us the lash of whips in return. Let us march."

Collins' father had moved into Monrovia after making a little money as a farmer. Both parents had become nominal Christians, but were not conspicuous for their attendance at church. Their manner had been tolerant and easygoing, so that Collins had



grown up without any particular fear of either the Liberian country devils or the super-devil whose pitfalls for the weak were explained in lurid detail by the Americo-Liberian clergy.

The limited course of study at Liberia's only college—an institution which would not rate as a second-class high school in this country—had not satisfied his groping, inquisitive mind. He read every dog-eared volume in the tiny library, learning from those books, sent as donations from America years before, far more than he learned from the sycophants who were the majority of the college faculty.

From the start, the independent young man had distrusted his teachers who bowed before the members of Liberia's self-perpetuating cabal. It was he who told me of how they yielded to the pressure of President Barclay and graduated his niece with highest honors, although the girl was an indifferent student who took little interest in her textbooks.

Collins was shrewd in his judgment of the matter. "If the girl had been given her proper marks and failed," he said, "it would have lowered the Barclay family, as well as the whole government, in the eyes of the people. The President was afraid of that. He told the teachers that they must either give the girl

her diploma with the honors due a Barclay or lose their jobs. They gave her the diploma and the honors. . . .”

In the days that followed, I made Collins a personal adviser, so to speak, and Brown an assistant. The man who looked like a Kru Buddha had too much the temperament of Matthew Arnold's "Gypsy Scholar" to be a very competent worker with his hands. So long as the carpenters under him did their jobs without unnecessary delay, Brown was quite content to sit on a near-by pile of lumber and pore over that ten-cent dictionary which, to him, had the inspired authenticity of a Bible. As he learned the words, he formulated new sentences, sentences which expressed the delight of an individual who has learned how to operate a machine with all its intricate switches and handles. I often thought of what Brown would have done with a printing press and an unlimited supply of paper and type.

There was no grumbling from the other carpenters while Brown sat in the sun with his book absorbing the power of words. However, if the carpenters themselves slacked in their labor, Brown would put his dictionary majestically in his pocket and roar at them:

“Do you not know that you are being remunerated for your toil? Why then do you stand there? Is it not enough for you to have the best Boss on the plantation? Back to your labors, my brothers, and do yourselves proud.”

He would continue to wave his arms, walking up and down until work had reached its normal pace again. The natives didn't understand all of his words, but they were impressed by his manner of saying them.

After the men began pounding their hammers and sawing their planks, the head carpenter would heave a sigh of relief and, taking his seat on the lumber, bend his head over the dictionary.

I believe Brown could have talked himself out of any complication. He was always able to talk me out of an extra ration of rice, or nearly anything else under my control that he wanted. I used to say, “Brown, it isn't as if you are humbugging me for true, I just get a kick out of the way you use good old-fashioned salesmanship.” He would preen himself and smile, and thank me most graciously for my belief in his ability. Collins was more direct in asserting himself; he had no words to waste in dealing with situations or people.

Once I sent him up-country to try to bring me back a certain idol I had heard about which I wanted to add to my collection. On his way through the bush, he was overtaken by a member of the Frontier Force who demanded "dash" (tribute, present, or a tip).

The average native would have given up his last penny had he been accosted by one of those funny-looking bullies. The spirit of the old Kru chief was too strong in Collins to be frightened by the soldier.

"If you don't let me pass without molesting me, I will enjoy cutting your throat."

The soldier turned rapidly without saying a word and hurried away. Nor did he press the usual charge of attempted murder in the nearest court.

Conditions like those make loud noises which eventually will awake a sleeping people. The roar of their rage will swell until it will reach the gates of Monrovia, like the trumpet blasts which tumbled down the walls of Jericho.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *M I S S Y   P A L A V E R*

FLOMO CAME to me with blood in his eye when he found out that One Cent had humbugged his missy. I had been afraid that the pretty little Kpessi girl would cause trouble with the natives when she came six months before from up-country to be Flomo's wife. Her eyes roved too much over the men who passed by Flomo's hut. Once or twice she suggested that I take her to my house for "a small, small visit." I would rather have a typhoon or hurricane descend on the plantation any time than "missy palaver."

One Cent was, of course, a fool; always on the lookout for a tractable girl, even though he had a good wife who cooked his rice and kept his hut. But he was also a very capable worker, and I wanted to keep him if I could hold his lechery in bounds.

I had One Cent brought before me. Flomo rushed

over and gave the man who cuckolded him a heavy slap on the face. "That's enough, Flomo," I said sternly. "Go over there and sit down until I call you." Then I addressed One Cent.

"Did you humbug Flomo's missy?" I demanded. One Cent looked down at the floor and grunted, "Yah."

"You have missy for your part, why you go for Flomo and humbug his missy?" I asked. One Cent looked up, shifted his eyes, and then turned his face away.

"But I never humbug de missy, Boss," he mumbled into the air.

"One Cent, look at me! I not agree for what you say. You just tell me you humbug, now you say you never humbug. You tell me one time for true, or I send you away."

One Cent broke down and confessed:

"Last night, Flomo's missy come to my house while I eat my rice. She say she hungry past anything. I give her small rice, she eat. Den she say Flomo go fer de river to catch fish. She say she go fer her house den she come back. I say I go wid her. We go Flomo's house, I look at her, she laugh, den I humbug her."

When Flomo heard this admission, he started to

rise from his chair, but I gave him one look and he sat down again. I called Small Sam, and had him fetch Flomo's missy to the office.

The girl was brazen and hard when she faced me. Somehow, she reminded me of burlesque teasers whom I had seen tried for indecent exposure in the States—the same challenging defiance, the same what-are-you-going-to-do-about-it air that would shake the hard respectability of New York police courts. And, uncomfortably, I felt like a bald-headed judge being legalistic toward a pair of pretty legs on the witness stand. Well, I might just as well get the business over with and get back to work.

“You agree dat One Cent humbug you last night?” I asked the girl.

“Yes, Boss,” she answered slyly. I could sense the taunting mockery in her voice, the contempt she felt for this man-world which made such a bother about a night's rendezvous. To have demanded virtue from Flomo's missy would have been like demanding acorns from a fig tree.

I made her turn around and face One Cent. “Would you like to have dis man for your part?” I inquired.

If it had not been for the presence of the white boss, the girl would have laughed in the face of her cring-

ing paramour, but her eyes were laughing when she answered, "No." I judged that One Cent must have put up as poor a showing in Flomo's hut as he did now when confronted with the evidence in the lithe shape of Flomo's missy. The girl yawned when I called her husband over to the desk.

"Flomo, how much you pay fer dis missy?"

"Three pound, Boss."

I pronounced my decision: "Better you send her back to her mammy and pa and get your money back, den you can buy new missy. If you sue One Cent, I fire one time."

An hour later, the girl was being escorted, bag and baggage, to her native village by a messenger. The messenger carried a "book" from Flomo, written by a native "book writer," addressed to the father of the girl, explaining the trouble, and demanding the return of the money paid for the girl.

I do not know whatever became of the girl, but I am sure that as accomplished a little hussy as that missy laughed at the respectable convention which decreed that she must be in disgrace because she had been sent back for her purchase price. It was more to my point, however, that ten minutes after the girl had left, Flomo and One Cent were working together



very amicably, as if no tempting jade from the bush had ever come between them.

We whites make a big hullabaloo about sex, entirely out of proportion to the real importance of an act which was meant originally as a simple method of preserving the different species of animal life. Of course, today we think a little less about the original meaning, and regard the act not wholly for reproduction's sake, but rather also as a biological release from a savage, passionate desire, or the sweet natural conclusion to a continuous contact with a loved one. We write poems about unrequited love. We stage fierce vendettas for the possession of a given man or woman. The African peoples, with a less complex economy, attach no more than a transient importance to sex, and they are not bothered by any moralistic sanctions about its fulfillment. Liberia has plenty of "missy palaver," but I have never known any native to kill another native over a woman. Actually he stands to profit if his wife becomes involved in an affair with another man. He can always demand a refund from the girl's parents, and collect it in the courts even if they pay it in installments of shillings, or of chickens or fruits. Then the same court will permit the native to sue his rival for damages, and re-

ceive judgment from two pounds ten shillings upward.

Polygamy is the rule rather than the exception in this country which has no matrimonial institutions in the sense known to us whites. Even the Americo-Liberians traffic in native girls, while outwardly maintaining the semblance of Christian marriage with mates whom they pick from the aristocracy. Their legal wife lives in the town; their concubines out on the distant plantations. Since the white men have never been ascetics in their dealings with colored women, they too have their native mistresses as well as their partners for the night during their stay in Liberia. Many white men take Mohammedan girls of the Mandingo tribe. The average Mandingo woman is sold for from five pounds upward, and is brought down from the bush country. Most of these women, although they do not wear the veil, still remain in the faith, even while living with a white man.

For of the native girls, I believe that the Mandingo—even though she is not married to the white man actually, due to the difference in color, and is only considered a chattel—is the most loyal of all the women. Maybe that is why the white man prefers her to females of any other tribe. No native women bear concubinage more regally than do these girls with

the strain of Arabic from the far-off North country. Most of them are graceful and modest, and they do not become forward when they have an opportunity to live with a white man.

One reason for the preference shown toward Mandingo girls by white men is that there is less disease to be found among them than in the rest of the African tribes. In his conquest of Africa, the white man has not spared any of the traditional weapons of imperialism—whether they be Bibles or battle-ships, guns or gonorrhea. Dozens upon dozens of my native workmen were infected with either gonorrhea or yaws, dread diseases introduced originally by white traders and slavers. I had as many of them cured as the medicine available made possible, but they will continue to suffer by reinfection—spreading further until the entire population becomes stricken—unless a national program of health is instituted by a genuinely democratic Liberian government. They *must* be helped in this by the white man, even though they reject the white man's ways. The accumulated medical and social knowledge of the world must be planted in Liberia, so that they may learn how to prevent the disease from infecting them, or how to cure themselves after infection. Gonorrhea, introduced by

the white man, has spread so far, not only through Liberia, but also through the entire continent of Africa, that 75 per cent of the native population is infected.

I was not surprised when girls of ten and twelve approached me and begged me to take them to my house to be my missies. After all, there are no proper schools which they may attend; no program of training them in occupations which would enable them to be anything else but concubines when they reach their teens. I knew that the children themselves were more interested in the prestige of being a "missy" of Boss than they were interested in the physical relation as such—that, and the normal sexual curiosity which psychologists find in children of three and four. The fault lay not in the girls, but in the failure of their country and of the supposedly civilized outside world to provide them with a program which would develop them into useful citizens.

The white man found it necessary to limit the rule of the native chiefs, since political institutions of the tribes must not be allowed to interfere with the profit he hoped to realize from the conquest. But there were other institutions which had a peculiar value for him

—both as a matter of physical convenience and because they helped maintain the suppression of whole peoples. One of these was the institution of polygamy which suppressed a sizable portion of the population: the women. He wanted black girls for his own enjoyment: he knew that as long as the women were slaves, so would the other elements of the population be slaves. The missionaries might sentimentally try to abolish polygamy: but their share in the conquest, for all practical purposes, had ended when they opened up different spheres of influence to the traders. If our race is noted for one thing it is this: that it has never let its religious and ethical principles get in the way of turning a dollar. Polygamy is a valuable asset to imperialism, if only because it determines the structure of the African home—and the home, after all, determines ultimately the structure of society.

My friend, Chief Arku, was not consciously helping to keep the chains wrapped around his people when he offered me a little harem of some choice missies. He had learned from experience that it was best to keep on the good side of the white man, because the white man had both guns and money. Moreover, he knew that the white man liked the black-

missy-part, and he was actually hurt, I think, when I refused to accept his kind offer of the little Buzzi girls.

In all my years of wanderings, I have never known such an inveterate woman-chaser as Taro, my cook. Standing just about five feet tall, heavy-set, with a cherubic face and a wide grin, Taro always wore a hat three sizes too large for him. He was the most lovable character I knew in Liberia, and, above all, he was an excellent cook. When he came into my service, he brought two of his seven wives with him. The other five he kept up-country on his farm, where they planted his rice and cassada and harvested the crops before the rains came. I had told Taro he could not keep more than two wives at any one time at my house for the noise of women under the house—the help are provided quarters under the house which is built one story above the ground on stilts—is very annoying. So one day Taro came to me and very coyly said:

“Bosso, you must trust me three pounds.”

“Why you need three pounds, Taro?”

“Bosso, I got new missy.”

“You can’t bring her here. . . .”

"Oh Boss, I send one missy up-country tomorrow-time."

"Taro, you will be the death of me yet—go bring her here, and if she be proper missy, I give you the money." Within twenty minutes Taro brought before me a cute little Bassa girl of about thirteen. Taro, with his wide grin, waited expectantly for me to look her over and put my stamp of approval on her. There wasn't very much I could do but agree, for if I didn't allow Taro to have the money, he would undoubtedly have spent most of the time away from the house instead of tending to his culinary duties. We sent Small Sam over with *the money, so that the father could not* accuse Taro of roguing him at any time. Sam was the witness, and the messenger, and no native dared question Sam's integrity.

I gave Taro fifteen shillings more, and let him go for the night. I called Small Sam to me and said:

"Sam, you tell James No. 1 he must cook de chop for Boss tonight, den you all go to play and enjoy Taro's wedding."

Sam obediently carried out my orders, and while my chief steward prepared my evening meal, I thought about Taro and his new missy. She would be treated very well, and his chief, or first wife, would

still remain as number one. Taro wasn't too different from a percentage of white men who like a change once in a while. In Taro, it is called a polygamistic instinct; in the white man, it is called "a wolfish instinct." After chop time, when evening chores were finished, I heard all my servants shouting and singing as they left for the camp where the wedding celebration was to be held. My faithful Sam came in with my evening lime juice.

"Sam, you not go to the play?"

"No, Boss, I stay here wid you—my heart not be satisfied when I know you be here alone."



## CHAPTER XIV

# S P E A R   T O   S T E A M S H O V E L

W H E N E V E R I watched my overseer, Martin, tinkering with the balky motor of the rock crusher, I saw all the latent power of the native peoples building a new nation where all men may work and build. Finally I began to think of Martin and the crusher as an entity indivisible and complete within the swift changing pattern of Liberia. The man and the machine—were they not the living drama of this neglected country where the overtones of the motor and the hammer and saw are already drowning out the shrill rhetorical speeches of that doomed dynasty in Monrovia?

I think that machines are wiser than some men. Engines and dynamos make no distinction between people who run their motors. Whoever learns the secret of operating an intricate machine can benefit from the results. Efficiency, not prejudice: that is the law of machinery, and it is a law which we might well

learn from those giants we created to take the place of so many human hands. It is the law which the landed gentlemen of Liberia will learn only after the great social processes of our day have lowered them—and raised them—to the level of plain working people.

For some day Martin will realize that his big hands were made to take as well as to give. Hands that can operate heavy intricate machines can also build cities, schools, and railroads. Martin's soft, easy voice will pronounce the judgment of history upon his rulers—a judgment impersonal and not cruel except in the sense that all historical change is necessarily cruel toward those who have stolen the yield of the warm, plentiful earth. Those hands will execute whatever sentences may be decreed by history, and execute them as inevitably as Martin ordered his sleepy laborers to work when they came out of their huts just before dawn.

"Here we are building—eventually at any rate—not a fortune for a corporation but a country." This was my thought when I saw Martin supervising the rock crusher, Wilson the concrete plant, and Marshall the cabinetmakers. The wheelbarrows of the rock-crusher gang moved along in a steady rhythm to the

commands of Martin and his sub-headmen; the rocks, taken up into the machine and ground to a fine stone, then moved along on the never-ceasing belt to the concrete plant a hundred yards away. There the shrewd eyes of Wilson were watching the sticky mass which was churned and stirred until it was dumped into trucks to be carted away where it would make a strong concrete that would repel the wind and the rain and the sun.

And only a short distance away, Marshall, always reticent and reserved, was smoking his clay pipe with the broken stem, watching and measuring planks with his tape measure, and occasionally giving a quiet order to one of the men working with him.

On mornings like that I felt the same reconciliation with earth and sky, with man and machine that my ancestors who helped build the cities of America must have felt when North America was young; giving of its youth to the old dreams of progress and freedom, of working together in that process which began with the log cabin and continues with the skyscraper. For here I was pioneering with pioneers. These three Bassas, toward whom I was drawn with such a deep affinity, were the real settlers and the real owners of this country, finding new ways of doing old tasks. The

Americo-Liberians had come to Africa as usurpers in the same fashion that my people had come to America as trespassers upon soil already owned by others. But there the comparison ended. My people had built cities of freedom, even when they destroyed the villages of the Indians to do it. The Americo-Liberians had brought nothing but desolation and slavery, had cheapened the noble thought on their official seal: "The love of Liberty brought us here."

On this job the black men guided by the white men were building something that would remain after this generation had passed on and was but a memory. By proper instruction the black man was learning to do the things which would sooner or later raise his standards of living. I think that this last trip to Liberia impressed me with the fact that the future scheme of the new world, after this war, must be built on the common human denominator of working together. Those who cannot learn the new mathematics of society—whether they be the industrialists in Pittsburgh or the landlords in Kakata—will simply have to be excluded from the sum total of the human undertaking until they learn that men and women add up to something more than a row of figures on an auditor's report.

That was the profound lesson I learned in Liberia, and I learned it by observation of Martin, the self-taught master mechanic. I had come to that country with the usual attitudes of the white man toward the black man—attitudes which are a part of the poisons breathed in by men of the so-called “dominant race.” Yes, I think I carried on my conscience my particular share of that load, “the white man’s burden”—the phrase which excuses imperialism by a sanctimonious feeling of responsibility toward the so-called “savages.” It has worked well for that small minority of our race which rules the world through monopolies and atrocities, such as Hitler and his anemic-skinned partner in the Pacific. But such things cannot last forever. The peoples enslaved will rise up in force to enjoy again the birthright of every human being. The superiority of a people may not be measured by gainful acquisitions through force, but by helping the others to ascend, to benefit by improvement.

How could I feel superior toward Martin, who could strip and rebuild the rock crusher far better than I, an educated man. The crusher was in very poor condition, but when it balked, Martin would patiently go to work with his tools, and in a short time he would have it in good working order again. This

was done with quiet good humor, without the profanity which always came from my lips in a blue torrent when I had to bother with the confounded thing.

Martin had never heard too much about engineering or vocational schools, yet I am confident that any American defense plant would welcome this sober, hard-working black man on its payroll. He was the son of a Bassa chief, who ruled wisely and well in his little territory back in-country. When Martin had become a grown man, he had found a child's primer, and had taught himself to do "small, small reading." He had learned, even if imperfectly, one of the instruments of the white man. Now, he wanted to learn the others.

So Martin had come to the Firestone plantation and gotten himself a job. He had been assigned to a crew bossed by a mechanic, and in a few months he knew more than his headman. He had an unerring instinct for gadgets and bolts, and a burning desire to increase his knowledge of mechanical devices. He, who had been brought up to use a dull Bassa spear on the hunt, learned to handle the shiny machines of the white man as those machines heaved and tore up the earth. Martin had progressed in the scheme of his life from the spear to the steam shovel. He had

been born in one epoch and now he was helping to make another.

I am sure that Martin took care of his few possessions when he was living the isolated life of the bush, for he handled every implement in his custody with the same reverence for its power, and with the same attention that he would have given his children. He knew every vibration of the rock crusher, as he knew the breathing of his wives. Any unexpected rattle would cause him to shut off the power, and start tinkering with his tools until he found the trouble.

The interest of the present-day Liberians in machines has the same basis as the interest of their forebears in the beads and mirrors of the white traders. We are inclined to regard the ancestors of Martin and Wilson as being childishly stupid because they exchanged valuable lands for cheap trinkets. Actually, the natives were quite legitimately curious about these new things which the strangers had brought with them. I wonder if our forebears were any less gullible when, in the sixteenth century, they paid twenty dollars for an ounce of beverage called tea, just brought over from China. Tea has now become such a commonplace beverage to us that it can be bought for a few cents in any grocery. That, however, does not make

our great-great-grandfathers seem any less naïve if we judge them on the same basis by which we judge King Ben and his contemporaries (who are described in a later chapter).

The Liberian royalty of 1821 were royally cheated when they disposed of millions of acres for a packet of merchandise. But they could hardly be expected to understand the scale of values established by the white man when their standards of exchange were based not on money, but on barter. Their descendants, knowing a bit better, learned not only how to use the white man's mirror, but also the white man's shovels as well. Hundreds of them in this generation are learning how to use the white man's engines as skillfully as the white man himself.

Two-thirds of the natives who come from the bush begging for work on the plantation ask to be assigned to one of the mechanical crews. They say:

"Boss, we work fer de rock-crusher part."

"Boss, our hearts be pleased past anything to drive motorcar."

Or a man would come to me and say: "Boss, I be carpenter, but I have no tools."

I would give the man some tools and put him to a small task. I did not mind if his work was incomplete



at the end of the day. If it showed a rudimentary knowledge of what carpentry should be, I sent him to my head carpenter and told him to teach him all that he knew. I was rewarded not only in the steadily increasing quality of the work, but also in seeing awkward, untrained hands become deft and fairly precise, as the men themselves realized the confidence that comes from creating something useful—whether it be a painting to hang in a gallery or a table to stand in somebody's kitchen.

I think the prize apprentice was Robert, the Kru boy, who came to me as a common laborer working for ninepence a day. When the young Kru first saw the giant tractor, his eyes shone with admiration and wonder. Voluntarily, in addition to the work for which he was paid, he cleaned the machine and would act as watchman during the night. Every morning he would manage to work within watching distance of the tractor, and look longingly at it until it rolled out of sight down the road. I think that Robert measured his day by the going away of the tractor in the morning and its return in the evening. As soon as the driver had climbed out of the seat, Robert would carefully inspect it. Came the day when the driver decided he needed a helper and came to me for a boy. Robert got

the job, and the joy he displayed at being appointed official assistant was only outdone by the vim and enthusiasm of his work.

He was a proud boy the day he was taught to drive the tractor. The clutch of that machine had grown more potent to him than all the curses of the country devils. Men do not long believe in magic that they cannot see when they come under the influence of the magic that can be felt and touched—and even directed once it has been learned. Frankly I am glad that no country devil was standing on the road when Robert took his first solo drive two months later. If the tractor had wings, it would have taken off. . . .

It is machinery which will ultimately change the whole structure of the Liberian republic. People who have learned about spark plugs and drive wheels tend not only to become free from superstitions of their childhood, but are also developing a genuine contempt for those who neither spin nor toil yet live from the fat of the land. It is the eternal vitality of the democratic process realized in work and grime and sweat against the carping indolence of the blood-suckers who end their days in gout and frets. In Liberia, it is Boatswain, the legendary man of the people, against the punchinello, who takes himself too

seriously in the folding little play of Monrovia with the curtain just about to fall.

But it may surprise many to know that we whites are liked in Liberia, even when a certain element of black men is despised. The natives feel that they have learned much, but that we still have more to teach. Let their attitude determine our conception of the white man's actual responsibility toward Martin and Robert, Wilson and Marshall—once this war is finished!

These trusting people, two million of them, are giving us a chance to make a new start in our dealings with black men, if we but realize it. We can take one of two courses in their country after the peace treaty is signed. We can take the wrong course of dispossessing their present masters and setting ourselves up as liege lords of those who would be free. Thus we will place ourselves in the unfortunate position of Rehoboam, who refused the plea of his people to lighten the burdens which his father, Solomon, had placed upon them. Rehoboam, I believe, told his fellow men: "My father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

Martin and his type of people will not accept such

judgment. He, and every other black or white man in the world, will revolt from unfair, heavy yokes. We, who are educated in universities, must realize that to prosper not only materially, but as a people, we must assist the suppressed, educate the ignorant, and quell the invader. We must realize that the African has learned to drive an automobile. He left his spear in the bush, and came to operate a steam shovel. He is advancing in the economic world. We can help Liberia and other weaker nations to progress toward modern industrialism—to the mutual advantage of all—without requiring a pawn ticket as security. We can, on a basis of mutual equality and coöperation, face with Martin—and the Martins of all lands—a new day when the triumphs of a united mankind will make the triumphs of dead empires seem less than mock battles waged by a boy with his tin soldiers and toy cannons.

*D E A T H   O N   T H E  
P L A N T A T I O N*

M O M O ' S F A C E was tight with pain when he came to me saying: "My stomach pinch me too much so I never sleep last night time." I led him into my office for an examination of his middle; my limited medical training told me one thing—appendicitis. It was just half-past six o'clock in the morning—muster time when the men line up to be checked in for their day's work. If I could get Momo to the hospital, twenty miles away, the doctors there could perform an emergency operation which would save his life. I liked Momo, and when I think of him now, I feel that he represented the composite character of all those thousands of natives kept poor by the little gang of politicians in Monrovia.

"I send you to de hospital part Momo," I said. But

Momo was a little superstitious about medicines. "Better I go fer de bush and take de country medicine," he replied.

"Oh no, I not agree for dat one. I send you to de hospital part," I told him.

Momo made no further argument. I wrote out his admittance slip to the hospital, telling him to go to the foot of the hill and to wait there for the truck that would carry him to the company-operated institution, a modern, well-equipped, and ably staffed hospital. That was the last time I saw Momo alive. He slipped off into the bush when I turned my back, and walked over a mile to the nearest town to the "country doctor." He must have suffered unknown agonies on that trip during which he was fighting a losing battle against death. The country doctor probably brewed him some sort of soup of herbs while he danced and gabbered over the concoction, and then, with a few additional incantations, gave it to Momo to drink. Now Momo, a young man not wanting to die, took the boiling mess believing it would heal him so that he could return to his job of digging. He would not openly dispute with his boss or question the boss' medicine, but his mental processes, flowing quietly like the broad rivers of Africa, told him it was

blasphemy to flout the Old Laws, and depend upon the foreign magic of the white man's cure.

Joe No. 1, foreman of a gang of twenty-five of my laborers, came to see me the following morning, Sunday. I was shaving when Small Sam knocked on the bathroom door, and said:

"Boss, Joe No. 1, he come see you."

"Tell Joe he must wait until I finish my shaving." After I had put away my razor, I went out on my front porch, where I found Joe waiting nervously, standing first on one foot and then on the other.

"Momo come back from de country doctor but de country medicine never help him," he said mournfully.

"Where is Momo now?" I asked him.

"Oh Momo home now."

"His stomach pinch him plenty?"

"No Boss, it never pinch him any more."

I was puzzled. Maybe the native medicine had helped, or I could have been wrong in my diagnosis of his malady.

"You mean it never hurt him any more, for true?"

"No Boss, it never hurt any more . . . Momo be dead."

That roundabout way of telling me about Momo's

death had been the "softening-up" process for an attempt to "humbug" me. Joe saw that I felt badly about Momo's death, so, without further ado, he came right to the point.

"Boss, I come see you fer de funeral palaver. Momo be one of your boys, so it be Boss' part to make de funeral."

"What do you mean, make de funeral?"

"Well," said Joe, warming up to the subject, "when a boy die, and he work for Boss, Boss must give de family eighteen shilling for cane juice, a piece of cloth to wrap de boy in, a bag of rice, five shilling for palm oil, and plank fer de coffin."

"Joe, you mean all dis be my part?" I asked doubtfully.

"Oh yes Bosso, dat be your part."

Had I not consulted my good friend and adviser, Boatswain, I would have been charged twelve American dollars, and would have been marked as a soft touch by the natives. Boatswain, my overseer, showed the same impatience with dishonesty as his great-grandfather, King Boatswain, had displayed when the Deys and Mambas had failed to honor their contracts with the Americo-Liberian pioneers. I did not want Joe No. 1 to follow his country-brother Momo to the



grave; and I was very glad that Boatswain was not wearing his forebear's cutlass when I repeated the headman's conversation.

"Joe be rascal," Boatswain thundered. "He try to rogue de money from you. Dis kind palaver only belong Boss if de boy who die be Boss' servant. If Boss agree, he can give de coffin part and small rice."

The coffin was ready in two hours after the carpenters had measured off the remains of Momo with twine. Momo was about five feet four inches in height, so the coffin was made exactly the same size. Native caskets are always built "skin tight" so that the corpse cannot escape and return to the village. Nor is any corpse permitted to stay above the ground more than a few hours—just long enough to build the coffin and dig the grave. *Rigor mortis* had not set in when the body was placed in the unpainted, roughly built box. Before the carpenters nailed the cover down, Joe placed a heap of bright bush flowers on Momo's chest.

Four hired pallbearers, two in front and two in the rear, hoisted the coffin on two crosspieces and placed the planks on their heads, as all the villagers formed themselves behind the casket in a howling, dancing procession. As the pallbearers led their tribesmen to the graveyard a mile away, they too danced and

gyrated to show that Momo did not want to be buried. They whirled around very fast, but not once did they lose control of the coffin. It would have been an omen of bad luck if the flimsy coffin had crashed to the ground and spilled out that corpse which had gone so protestingly into the oblivion of death.

Had Momo been a chief, there would have been some sort of a service at the grave. The country devil would have made his appearance and danced so that evil spirits would have slunk away, and allowed the chief to rest in peace. But poor Momo was just dumped into a hole in the ground and covered with dirt.

I had never seen the mood of a crowd change so abruptly as it did when the sobbing mourners saw the last inch of the coffin disappear under the humid bush soil. Those who were lamenting and weeping began to laugh and sing some native songs. They rapidly made their way back to the hut where Momo had lived and died for the wake—which always follows the funeral—in Liberia.

Momo's wife brought out the cane juice, while friends beat rice in preparation for the evening chop. All afternoon, until the sun stole behind Giibii Mountain, the mourners and their guests drank to Momo

until they had finished what cane juice they had. By the time that a new supply came in with a few sympathetic friends some three or four hours later, they had forgotten just what or to whom they were drinking.

When night fell over the thatched huts of the native workers, a fine chop was served, and every one agreed that the day had not been wasted.

Momo died from blind dependence on the country doctor, honored in death, but ignored and unrecognized in life. Festivities lasted as long as the supply of cane juice. When morning came, the workers reported with big heads, only remembering the fine chop and "plenty drink too much."

Men in Africa do not live by grief, but by rice. When the torrid sun was high and the natives were sweating over their tasks, the memories of Momo had grown very vague, and nobody, not even Joe No. 1, bothered to visit his grave.

*I G N O R A N C E   I S   N O T  
B L I S S*

KING BEN of the Bassa people was shrewd enough to realize that writing was a form of magic far superior to the spoken curses and incantations of the lazy tribal priests who claimed every choice goat and virgin as payment for knowing the sacred mysteries. The old chief had watched the slave traders to whom he sold his enemies figure up his rewards with their long quill pens on the huge account books, and the pens impressed His Majesty more than the sticks which the country devils flourish when they are driving away some evil spirit that has been plaguing the Bassas. King Ben was as skeptical of his clergy as any mediæval sovereign who, for certain reasons of state, tolerated the bishops, but privately felt that they knew no more and no less about the unseen than the next man.

He felt vaguely that the evil spirits would probably disappear like the ripe palm leaves fading into thin air, if his people were to learn that magic which had fascinated the old chief when he first saw printed type in a dilapidated ship's Bible. The presence of the strangers from America proved that the magic worked for the black men as well as for their white leaders. He knew that they had been slaves in that country from which they had been brought to that island in the Montserrado River. Now they were free—proof to a realist like King Ben that being able to write did things for men.

Long afterward the Old King remembered that he had influenced the other chiefs to cede land to the colonists, because he hoped that knowledge of their magic would spread to his people. At first he had been as stubborn as the other rulers about yielding one inch of soil to the people who might, through their very knowledge of that magic, take over the slave trade from the native middlemen. But if the Bassas learned to read and write, they could not only hold their own with these possible competitors. They would also be able to write in account books, and to get good prices for the human flesh driven unwillingly through the jungle to the barracoons and the waiting boats.

King Ben had palavered long with the other chiefs before getting them to see his point. There were times when the King felt that his fellow-sovereigns were as stupid as the country devils, not realizing that the arrival of these strangers meant that any chief, worth his cassada, had to do some quick thinking about the future.

The King thought he had gotten the best of the bargain when the purchase price of cheap trading goods had been made to the chiefs ogling themselves in the shiny new mirrors, and running their big hands over the heavy, iron kettles. Let his wives do the gloating over his share of the merchandise. King Ben was thinking in terms of higher stakes.

He called his oldest boy. Then he gravely presented the youth to the white men who had struck the bargain for the colonists.

"You have my son," King Ben told them. "You take him Sierra Leone learn book." That was more than a hundred years ago. During that time every other country calling itself a republic has established a system of public schools so that a twentieth-century barber is a better informed man than a sixteenth-century emperor. Public libraries with shelves of books, newsstands with rows of magazines and

newspapers, the inevitable bookcase in the home—all these are eloquent testimonials to the freeing of man's spirit through that written magic which King Ben thought worth more than a shipload of kettles and mirrors. The modern factory and the modern labor union are to a very large extent results of that process which began when man had ceased to fear, only because he had learned to read.

Liberia, however, is the closest approximation to the dream of that old fox, Governor Berkeley of Virginia, who piously hoped that he would never see a printing press or a schoolhouse in that particular realm of his King. I am not drawing any possible analogies when I remember that Governor Berkeley eventually found his capital burned to the ground, and he, himself, fleeing from it with his little entourage of gentlemen cavaliers who abhorred work as much as do the gentlemen politicians of Monrovia.

The Liberian aristocracy itself is proof of the degeneration which overtakes the rulers when the ruled are systematically kept in ignorance and superstition. Not one single magazine is published in Liberia; not one single literary or historical review which might reflect the relation of this nation to a world of many nations. The one periodical of the country is a

weekly four-page paper, printed in outworn type, which obediently lauds every policy of President Barclay, and records the small lives of the aristocracy. Aside from abusive pamphlets, circulated against each other by rivals in business or politics, this little paper is the sole literary output of the country. There are no bookstores, and no libraries worthy of the name.

I know that the spokesmen for absolutism are always justifying slavery by claiming that the existence of a leisure class is always favorable to the development of culture. Actually a culture which springs from tyranny becomes not the constant interplay of fertile minds, but an endless minutiae of forms and polite gestures. If you are of the gentleman's caste, you will be received charmingly and graciously when you visit an Americo-Liberian home. You will also be bored to death.

For there will be very few books and usually no magazines in the residence of your host. Generally, the Bible is the only piece of literature to be found on the premises, while your Americo-Liberian has never heard of the authors read by every shop-girl in a democracy. Writers such as Hardy and Zola, scientists like Darwin and Huxley, have lived and died in



this world which moves onward to new, enlightening discoveries of the mind and spirit. But they are known in this masquerade republic only to those few Americo-Liberians who have been educated outside the country—and those few never talk about them.

After all why should one bother to learn about new ideas if he is born into a pattern that is comfortably fixed from the moment that he is born until the moment that he dies? Why worry about doing things for oneself, if there is always an obedient Kru or Bassa boy around to do it for you? People who disdain to harvest their own crops will hardly find the energy to read a book or write a poem.

Of course a gentleman or a lady must know how to read and write as a mark of distinction between him and the "inferiors" who reap his corn and polish his boots. That is pretty much the philosophy behind the so-called "public schools" in the Americo-Liberian districts. To protect the little gentlemen and ladies against possible contamination from the ragged little boys and girls of the bush, it is necessary to assess an annual entrance fee of five pounds (approximately twenty dollars) for each child. That amount would feed a fair-sized native family for three months. As for the natives in general—"well, some people are just natu-

rally ignorant and what can you do about it, anyway? Education would just make them unhappy.

"Therefore, why should a lady or gentleman concern himself with the 'naturally ignorant' or waste precious energy trying to get public schools established in the native villages of the bush?" This was told to me by an official in Monrovia one day.

Children, in countries where one's living means a job and not an unearned inheritance, ask questions in their schoolrooms, and do not hesitate to argue with their teachers over some question of economics or politics. This healthy attitude forces the instructors to keep abreast of what is happening about them. Americo-Liberian children ask few questions, and commit only such petty breaches of discipline as throwing spitballs or pulling the hair of the little girl who sits in front. Why question what seems to be the universal order for the ruler and the ruled? Living in homes without books, Americo-Liberian youngsters have no background by which they can draw contrasts. And the teachers, themselves people of limited education by the standards of modern pedagogy, would no more question the economy or the government of Liberia than they would question the rules of multiplication. Their job is to make docile little

aristocrats for the aristocracy in order that the Liberian economy and government may remain a fixed order, muddling along through the grace of God and the sometimes impatient tolerance of larger nations.

Since no lady or gentleman may risk social ostracism by doing anything with his hands, it follows that vocational education is a heresy that must not be allowed to creep into the unchangeable curricula of the public schools. I am certain that any Americo-Liberian planter would have a mental hemorrhage if you were to suggest that his son might be trained to be a good carpenter or his daughter a good bookkeeper. One's son can stay within the pale by becoming a customs official, a preacher of one of the respectable denominations, or a lawyer. And one's daughter almost invariably marries within the Americo-Liberian circle, to bring up her husband's legal children while he dawdles with his native harems located up-country.

I do not wish to dwell on what the College of West Africa offers to its students—the less said about it the better. But its net result is simply to confirm the snobbish little prejudices which have already been implanted by parent and primary teacher. The truth is that it cannot unlock the buried potentialities of young minds, because it lacks the keys of free inquiry and

free thought. It is as much a part of the despotism as are those English institutions which annually turn out future statesmen with old-school ties to keep intact the British Empire and the British caste system.

There is far more hope for the future of Liberia in the mission schools conducted for the native tribes by American religious denominations. These schools are few in number, and their very limited facilities makes it possible for them to reach only an infinitesimal section of those whom they wish to serve. But only in the mission schools does one find realized—even if on a limited scale—the wish of King Ben for his people. If the Liberian government were sincere in its expressed concern for the native peoples, it would call in missionaries like my friend, Dr. Embree, of the Booker T. Washington Mission at Kakata, and ask them to organize a modern school system for the republic. Actually, of course, the paper-promises to educate the natives made by the Liberian government are intended purely and simply as propaganda to prevent the world from overturning President Barclay's apple-cart. Dr. Embree and the rest of the mission-school teachers realize that the salvation of Liberia, like that of other countries, lies in work. The children who come to the Booker T. Washington

Mission are taught carpentry, mechanics, scientific agriculture, and other subjects which will enable them to transform their country by applying their skills in useful labor. At the outset, the pupil is encouraged to become a wage-earner in his own right, and to learn how to handle money. He works a certain number of hours per week for his education and his keep. Any extra hours are credited to his account, and are paid for in cash when he leaves the school.

I feel that the Booker T. Washington Mission is the cradle of the new Liberia, because its devoted faculty is bringing forth a new type of native from the dark matrix of the bush. Its graduates go out into the world with a feeling that their learning has just begun and that the world, as such, is bigger than the precincts ruled by the Americo-Liberian politician or the native chief. I had dozens of men from Booker T. Washington and other missions working under me. They confirm my opinion that Liberia will ultimately be freed by the courage and resourcefulness of her native peoples, supported by the people of good will in the rest of the world.

The mission schoolboy who has learned how to drive a tractor or tinker with the gadgets of a steam shovel has nothing but contempt for the pompous law-

yer or legislator who lives by graft and bribery. Outwardly he may have to bow before the man in the rusty black cutaway and the stovepipe hat, looking like the second comedian in an American burlesque show. But as he becomes more and more informed, he will become less and less polite. Some day, very soon, he is going to stand erect, look his traditional enemy in the face, and settle some long-standing accounts.

There will be some who will dispute the following assertion, since they feel that the job of an army is only to fight. But I believe that one of the most constructive undertakings for the American forces, now stationed in Liberia, would be to establish schools for the natives. I am thinking particularly of the successful efforts of the Chinese Army which taught men and women how to read, even when its soldiers were their country's very life against the Japanese invaders. Those Chinese, whose minds have been liberated from the torturing captivity of ignorance, are no longer dumb oxen who can be slaughtered at will by the aggressor. They have become conscious, intelligent belligerents on the side of democracy, as well as integrated citizens of the free world because they have, at last, become functioning citizens of their own country. Liberia needs education to become a member of

the new world community now being established through the strain and the agony of all the world's peoples. Ignorance is never the ally of freedom, but always it is a main instrument of oppression. But care must be taken when Liberia's educational system is established, that the native languages and the best parts of the native cultures are preserved. We are not trying to make synthetic Americans out of Liberians. At the same time that we give them our techniques of education, we must also give them the same freedom to experiment with these techniques that we enjoy.

I do not think it at all necessary that classroom instruction be given exclusively in English. The highly intelligent Vai people have their own written language, and even have tribal schools conducted in their traditional dialect. The headmen of the Mandingo people read and write Arabic, as a result of their adherence to the Mohammedan religion. Any philologist, familiar with the main African tongues, could easily invent written alphabets for the other native languages in Liberia. Russian scholars did exactly the same thing for many groups, making up the U.S.S.R., which had distinct languages and no alphabets.

The dying imperialisms of the West have always

found it necessary to suppress the languages of their subject peoples because the passing of a language generally means the passing of any national tradition associated with the ancient tongue. In this epoch now closing, we have witnessed the decline of Gaelic in Ireland and Scotland, Cymric in Wales, Wendish in Germany, and the disappearance of many Indian dialects in our own country. Conquest is intended not only to destroy the body of a nation, reflected in its native political forms, but also its soul, manifested through its language and culture.

If it is to the interest of imperialism to place the dead stamp of uniformity upon all peoples, it is to the interest of democracy to develop the possibilities of all peoples. When every racial or religious group can freely express itself through its traditional culture, it will have no need to envy and hate the culture of any other group. Eventually, there will be a fusion which will unify all men into a living, vital democracy none the less world-wide because its citizens of one section may speak or pray differently from the citizens of another section. Political coöperation—but cultural autonomy. That is the lesson to be learned by Liberia, and by the rest of us as well. Any other course will lower the whole world to the level of Monrovia today.



*A R T I S T S   I N   L I B E R I A*

BETWEEN MY hotel suite in New York and the hut of Flomo No. 7, lies a physical distance of five thousand miles and a spiritual distance of untold centuries. Yet I would dislike to subject the stuff that we Anglo-Saxons buy as "art" to the judgment of Flomo No. 7, outstanding craftsman of the Buzzi people who works with the tools and in the tradition of a nation of artists. The Buzzi have not, as yet, received all the publicity and fanfare which a decadent, jaded public gives to every newly discovered people and its handicrafts. For that reason, thank God, they have not become like the often-tricked Navajos who now sell conventional tourist blankets to the gaping strangers from Iowa and Rhode Island, invading their reservations. Far back in the Navajo territory, of course, one can still buy genuine Navajo art—if he has shown

himself to be a friend of the Navajo and not another pesky collector of gewgaws.

The remote villages of the Buzzi people have not as yet been invaded: either by vulgar, loud-mouthed tourists or suave, patronizing collectors. And in the little towns of the Buzzi, the kinsmen of Flomo carry on traditional crafts which combiné beauty with utility, representing one of the most highly developed if one of the most unspoiled folk cultures to be found in the world.

"What white boss taught you how to work with leather?" I asked Flomo No. 7 after he had made a riding-crop for me which I still treasure as a gift from a man who was both modest and a genius.

"White boss no teach me," he replied. "My people they be leather workers since time when de sun first come up." That answer very tactfully put both me and our race in our proper place. It is one of our damning conceits, in our attitude toward other peoples, that only we have the ability to do things, and that only we can teach others how to use their heads along with their hands. It was only much later that I learned the tribal legend of Flomo's people—of how the gods of the Buzzi had decreed that their children were to excel all men in the use of leather. And their proficiency

with leather trained their hands and their heads for other arts. When the white man came to Liberia, the Buzzis began picking up the scrap iron which he threw away, turning it into articles, covered with ornamented leather. A sophisticated Park Avenue collector would exchange every piece of miscellaneous bric-a-brac he had acquired in a lifetime for the things that are made by Flomo No. 7.

That is what I feel when I pick up the riding-crop that Flomo made for me: its solid black leather handle firmly sewn together, its brown and black leopard-skin shank giving a touch of that old continent, my foster-mother, here in my hotel rooms. Flomo knew how to combine color with the sure artistry of a people who live close to the jungle with its contrasts of trees and plants and animals. The two pieces of red over and above the leopard skin remind me oddly of the blood which flows from the leopard's kill after the great beast has tracked down a deer or a man. The alternating weave of black leather and straw-colored reeds at the top could not have been equaled by any of the machines which furnish whips for the fox-hunting set.

But when I finger the keen lash of the riding crop, a lash of bush-cow hide originally soaked in water to

make it tough, I feel that the distance between America and Africa has been considerably lessened. How many of Flomo's people have felt the lashes of whips across their bare buttocks—whips administered either by slave traders or those who came afterward to rob Africa in the name of "civilization"? I wonder if the gun and the whip will always be the symbols of the white man's connection with Africa; if always, we must distrust ourselves and other peoples so much that we dare not deal with them on a basis of man to man or nation to nation. I never used my whip, but that does not exempt me from my individual share of the guilt which white men have incurred by mistreating Negroes—whether in Louisiana or in Liberia.

My conscience relaxes along with my feet when I put on the leopard-skin bedroom slippers which Flomo, the cobbler, made for me. I had shot the bush cow from which the under part of the slippers are made. When I brought the dead animal in, Flomo begged me for a piece of the skin. I gave it to him and forgot the incident. A week later, he brought me the slippers. "I made the tops out of leopard skin," he said in Buzzi. "That means your feet will always have the courage of the leopard and that they will always march to destroy the enemy."

Later, since fresh meat was scarce, I killed an African bush antelope, called a bongo, and, like any other vain hunter, I wished to preserve the horns as a mark of my prowess with a gun. Flomo took the horns and mounted them, placing a strip of bush-cat hide in the crevice at the base. I judged that my cobbler had grown tired of trying to tame the nasty little beast which he had picked up as a kitten in the jungle and brought home with him. The bush cat is about the size of our ordinary house tabby, but with a fierce disposition which gives him the general psychology of a petty hoodlum. Two such temperaments as the genial Flomo and that morose little cat could not possibly live at peace under the same roof. So he had killed the cat and used it to decorate this other gift for me. I am sure that he must have gone through the same mental struggle about disposing of the cat that I underwent if I happened to go hunting. I am opposed to the wanton killing of wild game, and have nothing but contempt for the "hunting expeditions" of Europeans who sally out into the jungles. Even today that makes me feel closer to powerful, gentle Flomo, whose appearance might scare some of those unfamiliar with native types. Flomo was a big, black man, six feet two inches high, with shoulders so broad that

he could not walk through an ordinary-sized door. His teeth protruded so far above his heavy lips that he could never completely close his mouth. But he would walk two miles out of his way to avoid a fight.

As I watched Flomo work, I felt that I had to learn more about the crafts of his people who seemed instinctively and genuinely to be a race of artists. I was glad when my job took me into the Buzzi up-country, for that trip has meant far more to me than any of those periodic tours which I make to museums.

There on broad verandas in front of their huts, I watched the native smiths, dyers, and weavers work at crafts which must have been highly developed when our ancestors, dressed in rude, untanned skins were still swarming down over the plains of Europe. One of my prized possessions is an iron throwing spear made by the Buzzi, Yapollo, and his apprentice, Blackie. Blackie had "small English" and Yapollo none. Yapollo picked up the spear still warm from the anvil and said in Buzzi:

"This is for my friend, the White Hawk." Ever afterwards I was known as the White Hawk in that section of the Buzzi country.

That spear is as perfectly balanced when I throw it, as it is keen and deadly. The crisscross phallic

markings on the shaft, I suppose, signify the hunters' wives and children who are to be fed with the game brought down by the deadly, narrow blade. The entire length of the spear is about three feet, being circular from the back of the blade to the beginning of the feather-shaped balance on the end. The grip in the center has the usual artistically woven leatherwork only found with the Buzzi people. The shaft is banded by diamond-shaped markings and finely cut grooves.

I would be sorry for anybody, white or native, who got in the way of that spear. I would also be sorry—for so deeply do the folkways of Africa grow upon a man—for anybody who incurred the wrath of the tribal idols of the Buzzi or of any other native peoples. Maybe I am simple-minded, but I feel that those two idols which share my room watch over me benevolently here in this country of streets and subways to which they have been transplanted.

Two female idols—one of the Buzzi and one of the Bassa—stand at opposite ends of a table here in my apartment, separated by a cottonwood drum of the Bassas. Even if I were to remove the drum, I feel that these two goddesses of ancient enemies might get along together as well as any two women exchanging the gossip of the neighborhood over a backyard fence.

Of course, the haughty goddess of the Buzzi—serene, erect, and well-proportioned—makes her crudely carved rival look like a country cousin. There are the same enlarged nipples and genitals on each of these immigrant ladies, but the craftsman of the Buzzi showed far more comprehension of the female form than did the Bassa who whittled out this scratched and shabby divinity on my right. However, I am no person to draw national distinctions between the two—sometimes I have the uncanny feeling that this war will reconcile the rival gods as well as the rival peoples of Africa. Africa's gods and peoples may be somewhat devastating to the high-powered little earthly paradises of speed and piracy which we whites have built, only to have them turn into smoking little hells when one Caucasian nation covets the private preserve of another nation.

This may also be only superstition, although I like to call it instinct—but I felt that the native craftsmen, sitting at their spinning wheels, were weaving out more than beautiful rugs and the fringed country cloth which covers the native loins. I felt also that they were weaving the fate of a continent. In years not far away, those same spinners will be sitting in the councils of a new Africa, helping to make the laws for the



first infant democracies that will spring up from that rich, pregnant soil. Their children, better educated, better equipped to deal with the modern world on better terms, will be poets and scientists, statesmen and engineers, members of every profession and occupation needed to bring every one of the world's citizens—even these neglected and unknown citizens in the bush—to their fullest and greatest possibilities of development.

For a people, capable of making utensils that are both a help to the hand and a joy to the eye, are also capable of developing institutions which will satisfy both man's heart and soul. Peter Kropotkin points out that two impulses run eternally and simultaneously through the lives of the folk—the impulse to create, manifested by such expressions as the songs and the tales of all countries, and the impulse toward free, coöperative societies manifested by such a phenomenon as the Swiss canton.

Neither the folk culture nor the emergent free institutions of Africa need be destroyed by the development of large-scale industry in Liberia and the other African nations. Our ally, Russia, has shown that it is possible to combine both mechanized production and folk handicraft without either preventing the develop-

ment of the other. Russia, by fostering the native cultures of its two hundred different nationalities, has actually revived handicrafts that were dying because there were no markets for them under the stifling feudalism of the Romanoffs.

At the same time, the tempo of its collective industrial production was a major factor in the stubborn resistance of Russia's people to the Nazi invaders.

But there is an analogy which is even closer to us. Mexico, before its national revolution, was a country governed very much like present-day Liberia. A small clique of Mexicans, who called themselves Castilians, dominated the lives of millions of brown-skinned Mexicans who happened to be Indian by descent. This situation hampered not only the development of Mexico as a nation, but the development of her varied and colorful folk culture as well.

From the standpoint of industrial development, Mexico is one of the most promising nations in the world. But the coming of the dynamo has not meant the end of native handicraft and native art, in general. Actually, the whole cultural pattern of the country is being molded upon the superb artistry of the Indian. The liking for Mexican-Indian art in the United States is known to everyone. Moreover, the Indian is now

enabled at last to earn some money by his talents. When Liberia catches up with the modern world, schools will be opened in the native crafts and I have no doubt that Flomo No. 7 will be one of the teachers. Exhibitions of tribal arts will be sponsored by a government representative of Liberia's peoples, and undoubtedly the future culture of the country will reflect the influence of every one of her different groups.

One people never destroys the culture of any other people, although a vicious ruling class may attempt to exterminate the values of a subject group. And when all peoples feel that the different cultures of the world are co-extensive and equally valuable, whatever their national or tribal form, we shall have finally begun to approach civilization.

In this period of the world's history, Flomo No. 7, without knowing it, is an artist of humanity.

*V I L L A G E S   O F   T H E  
B U S H*

RECENTLY THE postman handed me my first letter from Small Sam. I had been waiting impatiently to hear how my loyal friend and personal servant had been faring in the Booker T. Washington School at Kakata. I was proud of the progress that Sam reported in his studies because the letter confirmed my faith in the ability of the Liberian native to master a textbook as well as a tractor.

"I shall try my best to study my lessons very hard," Sam wrote in a cramped, but legible script. "In the schoolhouse you put me, if it happens that any one fails to pass other grade, you are not going to stay in the mission any more."

I am not going into any technical criticisms of Sam's grammar. When he came to me from the bush, three years ago, he found any letter-writing as painful

as he would have found reading a volume of Shakespeare. To me, the thing that counts is Sam's determination to learn in order that he may not shame me, himself, or his tribe by failing to pass his course. If he is able to continue in school, the matter of grammar will adjust itself, since he is still thinking in Buzzi and translating his native dialect literally into English. Small Sam means to take advantage of opportunity—as do all the people of the bush when they have a chance to break through the walls of ignorance and isolation.

Sentimental dabblers in Negro folkways would, of course, find much that is "quaint and charming" in the lives of the simple bush people. Masters of cliché, the professional folklorists would write tomes describing the Buzzi and the Krus as "simple people, unspoiled by ambition," living in a veritable Arcady where time is an abstraction. Those who have a vested interest in keeping people "sweet and unspoiled" never realize the deep currents that are churning beneath the placid surface of still waters. For indeed, Liberian village life, viewed superficially, is pleasant and so quiet that one can hear the flapping of vultures' wings as the big birds fly overhead.

These little towns of Liberia are simple places in

which the tempo of living has not changed for the past thousand years. Generally about a hundred people, comprising ten or fifteen related families, live in a double row of thatch-covered huts. Sometimes the houses abut crazily upon each other, so that the front door of one hut may face the porch of another. In the center of the village square stands the inevitable palaver house where the town chief and the council of elders gather to discuss the welfare of their people or to sit in judgment upon the petty disputes which sometimes disturb the tranquillity of every small community. When the head of the family awakens at dawn, he goes, as countless generations of his fathers went before him, to the near-by stream and bathes himself. Practically all of the villages are built near creeks or rivers, because the native peoples are generally cleaner than some amateur explorers give them credit for being. The native scrubs himself until his black skin gleams in the morning sunlight, using either a cheap soap bought from some trader, or made from the roots of a native plant. He takes plenty of time with his bath. The hours of another long day will not hurry so why should he, who must pass these hours away, strain himself?

After he washes himself, he may dip his clothes

into the water and give them a thorough scrubbing. One's country cloth must be clean and shiny, or else the wearer's pride will suffer. Body washed and clothes clean, he takes his native hoe and begins working in his cassada patch, situated either in the rear of his house or at the edge of the village a few steps away.

He continues laboring in the patch until noon, stopping occasionally to clean the crude hoe made of a piece of metal or wood attached to a carved wooden handle. Occasionally, he may stop and eat a banana, since the natives do not have breakfast or lunch in our meaning of the words. At noon he stops his work, since it is foolish to labor all day under the hot sun when the ground is so fertile and its yield so abundant. Then he will stretch himself out on his dirt porch, and sleep with his family on grass mats during the afternoon. If he does not sleep, he may visit with a neighbor and spend the afternoon talking—for much conversation is always a characteristic of communities where there is little amusement. He and his neighbors may gossip for hours over all the petty, trivial details of a village where every individual knows the smallest incident in the life of everybody else. To that extent, the Liberians are no different



*Author's camp servants*



*Gola woman in Borlala*





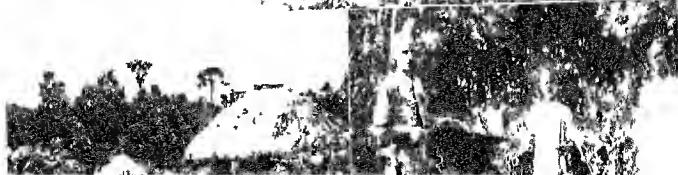


*Kpessi singers*



*Small Sam*

*Native house in the bush  
Author, Small Sam, and  
some leopard skins*



from small-town dwellers in Illinois or Texas. Not only men's occupations, but their thoughts also are determined by the particular environment into which they have been cast.

While the head of the family is away working in the cassada patch, his wives will be caring for the children and attending, like good housekeepers anywhere, to whatever may need to be done in their homes. The children receive scant attention from their fathers, at any time, since it is beneath the dignity of a man to waste talk on a little boy or girl. After the children have been sent out of the huts, the women will twine grass into mats, or sweep the porches with brooms of palm leaves bound together by reeds. In the afternoons, the women who are not sleeping will also visit and gossip. One will lie down with her head in the lap of a neighbor or co-wife to have her coiffure adjusted. African women wear their hair tightly braided, and you will find survivals of this traditional style even among Negro women living on the plantations of Alabama and Georgia. The braids are laid back tightly in rows. If insects from the thatched roofs have invaded the hair of the woman, one of her neighbors will part the tresses and deftly pick out the vermin, mashing them between her thumb and finger.

The women may talk of the crayfish that they expect to snare in the reed traps which they have set in the shallow waters of the stream that morning. For that is one of the traditional tasks of women in the African division of labor: to supply the crayfish which is mixed with rice and palm oil into the evening chop. The traps are cone-shaped, and two or three feet long. The foolish crayfish will go into any hole that he sees, and the narrow little mouth of the trap arouses his curiosity. Once he enters through the small opening into the larger space, he is an item in the coming meal. When the woman comes to collect her traps in the evening, she spreads the vertical handles at the end, and the accumulated catch drops to the ground. After the crayfish are gathered up, the woman pours the rice for supper into a wooden mortar resembling a vase. She beats the grain for about fifteen minutes with a long stick. This loosens the chaff which is finally removed when the rice is shaken in the funga, an oval-shaped tray with a reed bottom which serves as a sifter.

But the native African instinct for expression asserts itself even in such a homey task as sifting out the rice. The woman shakes the grains so that they fly high in the air. The kindly wind will blow away

the remaining chaff, but every bit of the edible rice will fall back into the tray. After the rice has been sifted, it is placed in the big iron kettle, covered with banana leaves so that it will be properly steamed, and then cooked, along with the rest of the chop, on hot stones in the middle of a fire.

That supper is the only big meal of the day. After supper, the men may go fishing or hunting, returning in plenty of time for a long sleep with all the restless or quiet dreams of Liberia.

I do not know what they dream. But I think that I have known something of those visions which come to Liberians by night from the number who leave those quaint, timeless villages to drive tractors or tinker with engines. For I know that no people sleeps forever, and that men always willingly exchange the torpor of doing little for the exhilaration of doing much.

So Small Sam feels as he sits behind his desk, working out problems of arithmetic and mastering the intricate grammar of the white man. The time is not far off when he will help awaken his village, and then none of his people will want to return to the long years of sleep.

## CHAPTER XIX

# MAKING LIBERIA SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY

"An invasion army of civilian experts in mufti, to follow and consolidate on a sound economic basis the gains of the military in French North Africa is envisioned—by officials. They see in our success a potential proving ground for a new and aggressive economic warfare.

"Conquest alone is not enough, these officials reason, insisting that a carefully planned campaign must be carried forward to win over the native population. If it is not possible to accomplish this end by friendly word and gesture, by promises of health and guarantees of happiness, then, officials say, we must resort to bribery, to purchase, and to solid economic achievements."—Washington dispatch in the November 28, 1942, issue of the *New York Post*.

"The African has many well-meaning friends, but far too often they fail to see the fundamental injustice and

hopelessness of the colonial relationship—one that cannot be remedied except by putting primary emphasis on native interests as over against foreign interests; on human values as over against pounds and dollars.”—Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe, secretary of the West African Students’ Association in the United States, in the November, 1942, issue of the *Survey Graphic* (New York).

IT IS a pity that our State Department did not summon Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe to Washington before we made plans for Africa. Mr. Mbadiwe—or for that matter, Chief Arku—would have told the State Department, with the ringing certainty of a people tired of conquest and foreign rule, that the sun of empire is setting out there in that continent whose rich pickings built modern empires. But a certain bloc in the State Department, and those who, like Henry Luce, speak glibly of a new “American Century” of imperialism did not bother to consult Mr. Mbadiwe or anyone else qualified to voice the wishes of the native peoples. That would have been as heretical in terms of our present world order as if Mr. Barclay had sat Chief Arku down at his table in Liberia, and asked him what opinions the people of the Buzzi had about the future of their country.

"Our victory must bring in its train the liberation of all peoples." These were the words of Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles long before the first American fighters had landed on the shores of passionate, waiting Africa. "Discrimination between peoples because of their race, creed, or color must be abolished. The age of imperialism is ended." These were words which swept through Asia and Africa, through that whole imprisoned world of the colonies and semicolonies, with the force of the hot driving winds that blow up from the desert and bush. They were words which must have caused the Liberian governing clique at Monrovia to tremble in their seats and to hold hurried, scheming conferences with the intention of making "deals" which would keep intact their rank and their property. Partly on the strength of that promise, the native Africans of the French colonies still continued to fight for democracy under the banner of the Fighting French after the betrayal at Vichy. "The African doings are the chief discussions when we talk at lunch time," Pleass Kellogg, a Negro truck driver working in the International Harvester plant at Chicago told a newspaperman. "They see our boys fighting for the liberation of the dark peoples of Africa from colonial slavery. I know that the enthusi-

asm shown will result in greater production—and that goes for the white workers too.”

But the words of Sumner Welles and the hopes of Pleass Kellogg, who sees his people as a subject race both in America and on their mother continent, Africa, are too much for gluttonous conservatives sowing the seeds of new wars, generation after generation, by ravishing the less-developed nations of the earth. It was unfortunate that these conservatives should have found, as their spokesman, Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, co-author with President Roosevelt of the Atlantic Charter, which many of us regard as the framework for that new world order in which international politics will express the dignity and the freedom of all peoples, rather than the selfish interests of wolflike merchants and traders.

“Let me, however, make this clear, in case there should be any mistake about it in any quarter; we mean to hold our own,” Mr. Churchill declared in his first speech after the African coup. “I have not become the King’s First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.” Previously, Mr. Churchill had already ruled Asia and Africa as outside of the immediate application of the principles contained in the Atlantic Charter.



That, too, was language which President Barclay and his henchmen understood—the language of the knout and the hut tax. And certainly the Monrovia clique must have breathed easier once the United Nations had made arrangements for the occupation of Africa through Admiral Darlan, former protégé of the Nazis, and had ignored General de Gaulle, leader of the Fighting French, whose efforts resulted in keeping French West Africa, revolving around strategic Dakar, from surrendering to Vichy and Berlin. Had French West Africa become Nazi territory—and Darlan spared no efforts to make it so—Liberia could not have escaped conquest and annexation at the hands of the Fuehrer's killers.

Is that what white men from America and black men from West Africa are giving their lives for—to reshuffle Africa so that the financiers of New York and London will hold, in pawn, the people and resources once owned by the financiers of Paris? The pattern of an American empire in Africa has already been traced by the Firestone Rubber Company, with its economic annexation of Liberia. Other American corporations are greedy for their share of the wealth which could be realized from undeveloped territory, with its hordes of cheap labor. Shall we, a people

born of a democratic revolt, deny our world mission by maintaining, through tanks and guns, the rule of such a dubious character as Barclay?

Is the test of a given strategy the preservation of moldering empires? Do we intend to give freedom to Pleass Kellogg in America and to his kinsman by color, Small Sam, in Liberia? Or do we intend to swell the already bulging profits of men who sell peoples as they do tusks of ivory, by making Africa and Liberia safe for greed? If this is our aim and the aim of Britain, then the spiritual lesson of this war has been lost on us. Then we have hardened our hearts against the timely counsel given us by Vice President Henry Wallace:

"... the Anglo-Saxons have had an attitude toward other races which has made them exceedingly unpopular in many parts of the world. We have not sunk to the lunatic level of the Nazi myth of racial superiority, but we have sinned enough to cost already the blood of tens of thousands of precious lives. Ethnic democracy built from the heart is perhaps the greatest need of the Anglo-Saxon tradition."

But is the test of a strategy to be measured by its effect upon the colored peoples—who, of the world, hold the keys to victories? Shall we forget that China,

one of our major allies, is a nation of colored peoples; that even our war effort at home has been hampered by the well-founded distrust of fifteen million Negroes who see their brothers lynched and disfranchised at the same time that they are being called by draft boards to fight supposedly for guarantees never realized in their own experiences? Many Negroes in this country have been made to feel, through our lack of ethnic democracy, that this is another "white man's war" which offers nothing to them but death. Many Negroes in Africa have exactly the same feeling, and it is voiced by Mr. Mbadiwe in the article from which I have already quoted:

"If it be argued that Africa, in great part, had colonial status before the war and that the people who inhabit it should therefore have no expectations beyond that, our answer is unmistakable. Much sacrifice has been expected and required of us, which in itself presupposes both moral and practical obligations. Moreover, the willingness of Africans to undergo further hardships in order to help bring freedom to the world at large, implies the right and warrant of freedom for ourselves. Otherwise Africa is under no moral obligation to fight. Subjection under present

rulers is not sweeter because subjection under Japan or Germany would be even more bitter. Africans to-day, to the extent that they are informed as well as intelligent, are in a mood of watchful waiting, and stir uneasily after vain years of patience and hope, because of the great disillusionment which now be-sets us."

That is exactly what my friends, Brown and Collins, would say if you gained their confidence sufficiently so that they would discuss politics with you in that country of Liberia where too free political discussion may mean, at the least, the burning of your hut. Far and beyond any shadowy and enforced allegiance to Monrovia, the native peoples of Liberia feel a common bond of resentment; and they hope, with their black brothers of every other African colony whatever the flag that it may fly, that a "new deal" will come to them out of this war. Indeed whole tribes, hoping to escape the harshness of Monrovia, simply slipped over the boundary into French West Africa during those years before the Second World War. French-speaking West African natives, in turn, circulate freely among the tribes on the Liberian side of the border. Pleass Kellogg, who has never seen

Africa, would be welcomed by the Bassa and Buzzi peoples because, although an American Negro, he is a man who works and not a lazy Americo-Liberian.

The community of the black man throughout the world is something which the white man, with his eternal wars of conquest, his habit of enslaving even his own kind, cannot understand. But it is a moral factor with which we have to reckon in our present military offensive, and a factor with which we will have to reckon when the accounts of Liberia and other African countries are considered at the peace table.

If the Axis is unable to hold the former French possessions by force of arms, it will inevitably attempt to defeat the United Nations by the use of native fifth columnists, traveling through the bush, sounding the drums for a war against the present masters. That tactic was used with great success in Burma and Malaya—now lost to us along with their rich resources. Liberia, because of its very proximity to French West Africa, where fifth columnists have already been active, would hardly be neutral territory in case of a native upheaval. And civil war in Africa at this time would not only imperil the badly needed resources of Liberia. It would also imperil Monrovia—miles closer to the shores of America than Dakar.

But if, at this critical moment, we take positive steps toward democratic reconstruction of Africa, we have taken a major step toward winning the war on a global scale. A positive policy toward Africa would ease the tension in India where a bitter, hostile people feel that they have been betrayed by those who loudly preach democracy, but seldom get around to practicing it. It would make colored peoples the world over feel that the white man was finally living up to his principles, and not simply talking for the sake of getting somebody else to fight his battles. And, finally, it would insure both the military and economic participation of one hundred and sixty million natives on our side in this global war for freedom.

The peculiar problems of Liberia must be solved within the framework of a free and democratic Africa. But it is in Liberia, which already has the political forms of independence, that the United Nations might well begin its task of helping less-developed peoples find the road toward the new world, where ethics will combine with the techniques of modern science toward general human advancement.

、 The native intelligentsia of West Africa has formulated a five-point program for the democratic development of the continent which applies, with slight

variations, to the tortured peoples of Liberia. It has been expressed in its broad outlines by Mr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a native Nigerian and graduate of Columbia University, who now publishes the *West African Pilot*, the most influential and dynamic native newspaper on the continent. This program of Liberation includes:

1. Governmental Reorganization to insure effective native political participation toward the ends of popular self-government and political independence.

2. Labor Reform, to insure the protection of the native from exploitation either by the state or private industry, and, for his benefit, the same fundamental rights of union organization and security which now prevail in the democracies of the West.

3. Land Reform, to guarantee proper use of the soil for the whole community as well as the proper conservation of natural resources and the prevention of misuse either by expropriation or excessive foreign profits.

4. Mass Education to wipe out illiteracy and raise the general standard of living so that the native may become a functioning part of the modern world.

5. Spiritual Freedom, to reassert the values of Africa's own native cultures developing in fruitful but

unforced combination with the civilization and culture of Western Europe.

The Liberian regime will make no effort, by itself, to realize any of these aims. Paraphrasing Mr. Churchill, Mr. Barclay will not voluntarily "preside over the liquidation" of his own profitable business. The Liberian government, for example, has about as much use for governmental reorganization as Senator Bilbo of Mississippi has for enfranchisement of the Negroes and poor whites in his politically mediæval commonwealth. It would certainly oppose land reform, because that would mean limiting the estates which are the economic base of the aristocracy. Labor reform would mean that it would have to deal with its slaves as men rather than as work-oxen. Spiritual freedom would imply the right of any man to criticize the regime, and to influence his neighbors in favor of political change. Mass education would finally snap the last chain around the neck of the native, and pave the way for the time when free men would sit in the legislature at Monrovia to make laws for a free people.

It has been suggested that the United Nations might, at this time, appoint an African political commission



composed both of educated Negroes and sympathetic whites to draw up the blueprints for democracy on that continent. This would be a long and positive step forward, because the world and the natives of Africa dare not wait until the peace conference, which may conceivably be dominated by men intent only on carving up the world into new spheres of imperialism. At Versailles, we heard much of "self-determination" for all peoples. Various territories were "mandated" to other countries more developed—and about the only positive result was the giving of naval and aerial bases to Japan. Any program for Africa and Liberia must exclude the idea of mandates held by any one nation over any other nation. Whatever supervision is necessary must be exercised by international commissions, composed not of traders and career diplomats, but of teachers, sociologists, engineers, physicians, and representatives of the native peoples and others who will help lay the basis for democracy by building a prosperous and healthy native life.

Fortunately Liberia is in the orbit of British West Africa where the native intelligentsia is more numerous than in any other section of the continent, and where the native peoples have become articulate to the point of organization for their own self-protection.

For the past twenty years, the West African National Congress has been proposing an autonomous federation, composed, with other lands, of the four territories of Gambia, Gold Coast, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. This federation, according to the program of the Congress, would provide for direct electoral representation and eventual self-government as the native population became integrated into the modern world.

Such a federation, controlled neither by Britain nor America, but aided by both, might very well include Liberia. The forms of national independence might be lost for this travesty of a republic, but its people would be independent of slavery, ignorance, and brutal exploitation for the first time in their lives.

# M U S T   L I B E R I A   D I E ?

*"The love of Liberty brought us here."*—Inscription on the Liberian government seal.

*"Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."*—Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence.

THE TWO Liberian judges bristled when I suggested that their country would lose little and gain much if it became a part of an autonomous West African federation. Like the proverbial fool who is less diplomatic than angels, I had argued naïvely that the native groups would probably be benefited through coöperation with other tribes in an enlarged black republic. When I looked at the shocked faces of the judges, I was glad that I was not a Kru or a Bassa committing such a political heresy. Had a native made such a remark within earshot of those two magistrates, he would have promptly been hauled off to jail in

Monrovia for an indefinite term—or more probably sold to the Portuguese plantations on Fernando Po. Governments—even the one at Monrovia—have to feed the men they lock up.

I watched the workings of those two judicial minds as they tried to divert their furious reaction into polite replies. From then and there, I knew that I was a marked man in Liberia. I had overstepped the bare tolerance with which the government treats white strangers, and shown myself in opposition to the administration which farms out offices to its favorites in the same manner as the lords of Rome had farmed out tax-collections to their henchmen. I did not regret what I had said; I only wished however that I had said it to Collins or Brown, those two educated natives who worried about the future of their country when I sat down with them in the evenings.

The older judge regained his composure. Then he purred:

“Oh no, that would never do, Mr. Hayman. We are a democracy, and I am sure that you do not wish to destroy any democracies. The native problem is a vexing one, I grant, but you Americans do not understand it as do we who have lived with these poor pathetic peoples for more than a hundred years. They

are just like children, you know, and have to be guided along slowly as children."

When I left the judge's house, I saw his native laborers sweating under the hot sun, cultivating his cane. Here was the answer, I thought—the power of these illiterate workers to build, with the other tribes of West Africa, a unified commonwealth which would enable them to lift their heads both in the presence of black and white rulers. The Mende and Mano peoples, for example, live on both sides of the border in Liberia and in British West Africa. Why should the artificial geography of strangers divide them, and prevent them from working as a compact whole for the good of their peoples? In this age, a government which neglects its greatest resource—its human beings—has lost all right to rule. Could an endless, self-perpetuating tyranny justify itself by continually invoking the fetish of national sovereignty? Those were the questions which plagued me there on that hot afternoon as I drove back to my house. In all humility, it is a question which must be answered by the peoples of Liberia, if they are not to go down with the ramshackle little republic which claims jurisdiction over them.

When I had mentioned the idea of a United West

Africa, I had unknowingly touched the sorest spot in the minds of both the Liberian politicians and of the British governors across the border. At that time, I had never come in contact with the West African Students' Congress, "Wasu," which has been the constant driving force toward just such a federation. Some of its ideas had seeped across the border into Liberia, in spite of the rigid quarantine against ideas exerted by the Barclay regime. For obvious reasons, Wasu has never included Liberia as another state in the new nation whose projected map is the same as that one drawn by the parent, West African National Congress. But if the plan should be realized through application of the Atlantic Charter to Africa, the pressure would be very great within Liberia itself to surrender the very thin semblance of national independence for membership in a larger republic, which would give security and freedom to the native peoples. Intelligent Americo-Liberian oppositionists like Roland Faulkner could play a decisive part in the formation of the new republic, and any lingering nationalisms in any of the proposed five states would be quickly forgotten—that is, if every tribe had the right to develop its own lands and its own cultures.

The present government at Monrovia cannot long

survive the awakening consciousness of a universe which is reclaiming democracy as its birthright. Sooner or later, it will crumple beneath the impact of blows which no puny, despotic state will withstand. But the Liberian tribes, kept in wholesale and systematic ignorance for generations, need the economic and political strength which comes from coöperation and mutual planning with kindred peoples. In fact, not one of those states in the proposed union—Gambia, Gold Coast, Nigeria, or Sierra Leone—could stand alone as an independent entity. But joined together, they would realize the profound truth contained in Mr. Mbadiwe's stimulating article in *The People's Voice*, November 28, 1942:

“ . . . nations and peoples have found their way to self-direction and control only through having the freedom to make their own mistakes and to learn from them. The African progressives believe that, in the final analysis, Africa must also find her way as England and America found theirs.”

I have no desire to enter into a formal definition of what constitutes a nation, but I suspect that the concept includes all of the peoples living within the national boundaries. For all present purposes, the Liberian nation is its twelve thousand aristocrats;

even the outlying districts of the country are designated as "provinces" rather than "counties," though without the elementary rights of self-government given American territories. The peoples of Liberia certainly cannot find their way to "self-direction and control" so long as they have two masters—the Firestone Company and the Liberian government—exercising complete authority over them.

For if Liberia were to become a part of this greater entity, its people would immediately begin to receive the benefits of the five-point program which the West African National Congress has proposed for that region. Governmental reorganization would mean the immediate dismissal of the Barclay clique, because the new nation could hardly afford to tolerate personal government for personal benefit in any of its five states. Members of the Americo-Liberian opposition, together with educated natives, would comprise the new government of a Liberian state which was living—because it would have shown the courage to become a part of something that made for life, rather than for death by slow stagnation. Of course, the property qualification for voting would be abolished; and the new legislature would include such representatives of the native tribes as Chief Arku, Brown, and



Collins. The beginnings of self-government could be instituted in the tribes themselves through a system of elected village councils. And within ten years, at the most, suffrage could be made universal—for by that time all of Liberia's citizens could have been taught to read, and thus be enabled to cast intelligent ballots.

For illiteracy is the chief bulwark of imperialism throughout the whole dark-skinned colonial and semi-colonial world. The man who does not learn his master's alphabet is liable to remain forever a slave, unless somebody takes the trouble to teach him. Education throughout Africa is largely in the hands of the missionaries, who manage to salvage a few people here and there from the tyranny of ignorance. I admire the personal devotion of the missionaries; I feel that, under imperialism, they have been about the only answer to a mountainous problem. But I would not recommend any system of missionary-controlled public education for the future of Liberia and West Africa. The men of the cloth, dealing with retarded peoples, tend to think inevitably in terms of a paternalistic theocracy. You can hardly blame them when you consider the investments that the missionary societies have made in lands and Bibles and churches for those who are to be converted. But theocracies are

dated along with imperialism—particularly since they always tend to stamp out the traditional culture of the native, turning him into an imitation white man.

Men like Dr. Embree, the missionary head of the Booker T. Washington School at Kakata, should certainly be called in to plan the technical details of an educational program which would embrace Liberia, as well as the other states of the West African nation. But the actual administration of the schools should be placed in the hands of such a man as the late Dr. James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey. Dr. Aggrey, born in a village of the Gold Coast, was a member of the Phelps-Stokes Commission to Africa, and possibly the greatest educator that that continent has ever known. As an American newspaperman wrote about him in *The People's Voice*, November 28, 1942:

“The influence of Aggrey on the African people is tremendous. His ideals influence many British colonial officials in formulating wise educational and social policies in various parts of Africa. Achimota College on the Gold Coast, Yaba College in Nigeria, Mak̄erere College in Uganda, Fort Hare and Lovedale Colleges in South Africa, and Gordon College in the Sudan are some of the great educational institutions either founded or completely reorganized

through the influence and initiative of Dr. Aggrey."

Today, the influence of Dr. Aggrey remains in Africa like that of his great contemporary, Dr. Sun Yat-sen in China. He was not a politician in the accepted sense, but it was his students who organized the West African National Congress; who, today, are that strong, socially minded intelligentsia whose members would comprise the central government of West Africa. The West African Congress itself has grown far beyond any sectional bounds, because the pupils of Dr. Aggrey also saw that West African nationalism, as such, would lead inevitably to the same mistakes that have been committed by the descendants of those original colonists in Liberia. The Congress has contacts throughout Africa; it has been the driving force behind other liberation movements that have sprung up on the continent since that First World War—which saw Africa redivided, but not released from captivity. And its leaders have never forgotten the central teaching of their revered master—educate our people. Liberia needs the practical idealism of Aggrey in its educational structure if its social structure is to develop from a paternal despotism into a democratic economy, utilizing all of its neglected human and natural resources. Of course,

the control of the Liberian schools as such would pass into the hands of the central West African government. But I feel that more schools would be built in Liberia, if education were planned on the broad basis of educating *all* West Africans.

The West African leaders are extremely anxious to preserve all the native languages and cultures. Primary instruction, at least, would be conducted in the languages of the tribes, even when it became necessary to invent alphabets for those people who have no written languages. The problem would be simplified, of course, with a literate tribe like the Vai, which has schools in its own dialect, and with the Mandigos who have adopted Arabic as their written expression. The College of West Africa at Monrovia would probably be improved and converted into a Liberian state university, part of a chain of institutions of higher learning which could also include the established colleges in other areas of the new republic.

At the outset, the program of education would have to be all-embracing. Adult schools would have to be set up for illiterate men and women, as well as grade schools for the children. Such schools were enormously successful in Russia where whole villages learned to read within a few months, as well as in our

own mountain areas of the South. Where no other written language was available, the instruction would of course have to be in English until an alphabet was formulated. English would probably be taught also as a secondary language in all primary schools, and might, for the sake of convenience, be the medium of instruction in the colleges.

Needless to say, any system of academic education would have to be supplemented by agricultural, scientific, and trade schools. For an emergent West Africa, including an emergent and affiliated Liberia, would need farm specialists, scientists, and technicians to bring the republic within the framework of modern democracy. Many of the natives who worked under me on the Firestone plantation would become willing pupils of these schools, and, eventually, capable citizens of a democracy which could gradually obliterate the memories of those shameful years when they worked, at ninepence a day, in their own country for a foreigner.

Mass education would also, of course, be the final guarantee for those three remaining objectives in the five-point program—labor reform, land reform, and spiritual freedom, although none of those aims should be postponed until the others have been realized. Li-

beria, as a backward, isolated nation, cannot fully solve the problems of land and labor reform by herself, nor can she attain mass education and spiritual freedom by waiting for it to be conferred as a gracious gift from her presidents. But as a part of a West African nation, she would become one unit in a combined area, twice the size of Texas, which would be in the process of economic and social reconstruction. Her people would be carried along in the sweep of that reconstruction; everything that was planned for the West African nation as a whole would be executed with the help of the Liberian peoples, adapting those plans to their own particular needs.

The native administrators of West Africa would be careful to preserve the communal holdings of the tribes and to develop agriculture on a wide-scale, coöperative basis rather than on a policy of petty, individual farms. Through the export of valuable commodities, the national administration could raise the money to buy tractors and other farm equipment, which in turn could be resold at cost price to the tribes, and paid for out of the annual harvests. Our own government is now aiding the Indian tribes to purchase agricultural implements which can be used collectively, and it is also sending agronomists out to

the reservations in order that the peoples of the tribes may become better farmers. Land reform might, of course, mean the eventual expropriation of both white foreigners' and Americo-Liberians' holdings—now the best and most productive land of West Africa. If these people would not be satisfied with reasonable compensation for their holdings, then the democratic pressure of that international commission which I have proposed for Africa would have to be exerted on behalf of justice for the natives. The land of a country belongs, by natural right, to the people of that country—and the land of Africa should be no exception.

The West African republics would be confronted with the particular problem of the million and a half acres controlled by the Firestone interests in Liberia. Needless to say, all the influence of the Firestone Company will be brought to bear against the formation of the new commonwealth, and it will use all of its international diplomatic connections to prevent self-determination for native Africans, when the terms of peace are being discussed by the United Nations.

I have suggested in another chapter (Chapter VII) that foreign corporations operating in Africa should be permitted to do so under limited leases, and that

the natives themselves should form groups to take over necessary industries when they have become qualified, through education and practice in self-government, to do so. I would not exempt the Firestone Company from that general principle, and I feel that, very possibly, the central West African government would find it necessary to shorten the terms of that ninety-nine-year-plus agreement which the bankrupt Monrovia government signed with this firm.

Once the peoples of Liberia and West Africa come into their own, they will immediately begin to reform labor conditions and to secure for themselves the spiritual freedoms which must complement any material progress if the soul of a nation is to survive. The West African leaders emphasize widespread trade-union organization as a necessary means of freeing both man's body and man's spirit. Unions are logical forms of self-protection for men and women who work; had they been organized on a large scale in Africa, that continent would long since have been further along the road of modern social and economic reform. Were the Firestone workers organized, they would be able to lead their country—so desperately in need of leadership—out of its spiritual wilderness.

But Boatswain, Collins, Brown, and those others—



strong men of strong peoples—will yet lead Liberia toward redemption. The particular redemption of their country will be found through its inclusion in a model African commonwealth which can be the forerunner of still other free republics, in that one-fifth of the world still owned almost entirely by those who came to conquer—and remained to rob.

Thus will Liberia live—by helping to give a new birth of freedom to that continent which bears Liberia in her ripe womb.

## AFRICAN MUNICH — ?

"During the losing days of the past year, the subjugated dark majority of the world thrilled to the Atlantic Charter, Four Freedoms, Century of the Common Man, Peoples' Revolution. I may be wrong, but since victory has come closer I sense a trend away from the lofty idealism that began this war. The victories in the Solomon Islands and North Africa have ushered in a world-wave of reaction. . . .

"The tax on being black is still being levied.—Negroes and the poor white of the earth are faced with a return to the status quo."—*Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Negro member of the New York City Council in his paper, The People's Voice, Nov. 28, 1942.*

MR. POWELL wrote his sad eulogy on World War II ten days before the first anniversary of Pearl Harbor. I am writing this on December 7, 1942—one year to the day since the falling of the Japanese bombs on that outpost in the Pacific. Twelve months to

a day from that episode which we hoped would confirm the century of the common man, I am worried not only for the abstract guarantees of freedom and liberty for which millions of young men have been called upon to give their lives; but in a more direct sense, I am wondering what the new turn of events will mean to my friends in Liberia—to Small Sam and Boatswain, to Collins and Brown who listened to me so confidently as I explained what the “war palaver” meant to people like themselves. I remember what I told them about Darlan and Pétain when the capitulation came at Vichy. “Darlan and Pétain are men like Barclay and Tubman,” I told them. “But my country is fighting so that Darlan and Pétain will go.” Those words had struck all of the passionate muted chords in the souls of those four black men. That night the last barrier had been broken between myself and Liberia—my four friends obeyed the formal instructions that I gave them in the days that followed. But our hearts warmed toward each other as we met on the job. Men who were divided culturally by the differences of a thousand years, we had, in our talks together, found that common denominator of democracy which unites the idealists of all races and all colors. And we talked for many nights as the scar-

let afterglow faded into the dark, terrifying night which came up from the banks of the St. Paul River to cover all of Liberia with its dark mantle.

I am glad on this first anniversary of Pearl Harbor that I am not in Liberia. For if I were, I would have to tell these four friends what had happened since the “war palaver” reached their country. For there is not one native in Liberia who would not spit in my path, if I failed to tell him that my country was playing a game of diplomatic croquet with Darlan and Pétain in Africa. The native does not know our relative and circumspect standards of honesty—he is an absolutist who believes that right is right and wrong is wrong without the qualifications that we of the dominant race have put upon these values.

Small Sam and Boatswain do not, as yet, grasp the whole scheme of world politics in this age when the irresistible force of property meets the immovable force of the people. Collins and Brown, more educated in the formal sense, would realize shrewdly that the *modus vivendi* reached with Darlan in Africa lengthened the lease of Barclay and Tubman upon two million tribesmen in Liberia. If I were to tell Collins and Brown the past records of Darlan and Pétain—how they had changed colors like the lizards

out in the bush—they would grasp the analogy. For Edwin Barclay, associated indirectly with the slave trade conducted by former President King and ex-Vice President Yancey, became the “democratic” president of Liberia when the fortunes of his masters began to wane. It was as crucial a mistake ever to have recognized Barclay as the legal president of Liberia as it was to have recognized Darlan as the *de facto* ruler of Africa. He, who has once bartered freedom to the enemies of freedom, will always be for sale to the highest bidder. Neville Chamberlain, in the name of democracy, threw Czechoslovakia to the wolves, and thereby precipitated the attack upon democracy. Today, one hundred and sixty million Africans—Small Sam and Boatswain, Collins and Brown, their black kinsmen of Kenya and the Congo—are about to become the pawns of a super-Munich, aimed at preserving the profits of the French-German *Comité des Forges*, of the constituent members of the American National Association of Manufacturers, and of those groups in Britain which would erase the handwriting on the wall—not only by betrayal of Small Sam and Boatswain, but of the people of the Bronx and of London’s East End.

This is the issue which faces all the people of the

world including the people of Liberia. Is the Second World War, for all the idealistic currents unloosed in the vast sea of human consciousness, simply to be a dress rehearsal for a Third World War? Or are the captives to be released and those who sit in darkness brought to the light through the sympathetic coöperation and understanding of their fellowmen?

Thus far, the latter question has been answered in the negative. Millions of Africans are immobilized while professional soldiers and professional diplomats dispose of peoples as they would dispose of chessmen over a convivial board.

It would be very dangerous to recruit Small Sam and Boatswain, Collins and Brown, under the promise of freedom—then deny them that freedom after the soldiers and diplomats sign the forms of the peace. For the rival empires of the world, in their fratricidal wars, always release the libertarian impulses of the folk disdainful of maps and boundaries. It is, therefore, much safer for the empires to sign treaties never to be enforced, and to ignore Collins and Brown in the stilted language of diplomacy—because whatever the suave oiliness of the peace, Collins and Brown are always those ominous shadows outside the door.

Those who uphold the old order are always

shrewder in their day than those who are the prophets of tomorrow. Darlan is a shrewder man than Boatswain—yet the children of Boatswain will be spreading their folkways over the moist, verdant surface of Africa when the name of Darlan will be but an ignominious reference in some library. Of this I am confident, because the great historic conflicts of the earth have eventually been resolved in favor of the people. But that generalization does not relieve us of our responsibility toward Boatswain and Small Sam, does not relieve us of our responsibility to see that this war is the *last war*.

We may give Boatswain and Small Sam no formal places at the peace table; we may transfer the peoples of Africa from one jurisdiction of imperialism to the other. But it will lead to our own suicide if we do not hear now their cry for freedom; if the garish civilization of the West, drunken from centuries of conquest, should not listen to the refrains being beaten out by drums in Africa, and muttered, between fragments of prayers, by the peoples of Asia.

Our former world has crumbled, yet we still feel that we can rebuild that world on the dead cinders of an era which collapsed when the long lines of the hun-

gry formed outside every capital of the Western World. We do not realize, as yet, that we of the West exist upon the sufferance of the colored peoples; that ultimately Boatswain is a greater figure than any American congressman kept continually in office by bribery and broken promises.

Let us beware the day when those broken promises come home for fulfillment. Let Barclay too remember that forgotten day when he promised to free Liberia's slaves. And let all of the earth's slaves remember the pledges that were made if they would but wear a uniform and carry a gun.

Boatswain will remember, and his remembrance will be greater than all the written archives of this war which we are fighting. Far back in the bush, the Krus and the Greboes will remember. For the memory of the people is longer than the promises of the diplomats.

We can, in this final period of the war, raise up Darlan in Africa, Hapsburg in Austria, Barclay in that little piece of the earth known as Liberia. Even so, our idols shall be toppled, and our dreams of empire be but the vagaries of fools in a day that is passing.



The obituary of imperialism is also the obituary of Darlan and Barclay. It need not be our epitaph if we choose the life that comes from coöperation rather than the death which comes from acquiescence and compromise.

Since this chapter was set into type, the assassination of Darlan has occurred, but the authors believe that the warning—implicit in the Chapter title, “African Munich——?” should still stand, and that the great nations—in their dealings with the small peoples of the earth—must ever remain aware of their positions as exemplars.

A. I. H., H. P.

January 5, 1943.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *L O O K I N G   F O R W A R D*

LIBERIA BEGAN as a dream of freedom for a race of bondsmen. It is not too late for that dream to be realized. The nightmare of the past can be obliterated by the vision of the future, if we here in America have any real grasp of that future.

For several reasons, I am making this appeal on behalf of Liberia's potentially democratic majority to the people of my own country. In the first place, the Liberian republic would never have come into being had it not been for the sympathetic interest and the financial assistance of many Americans.

And there is the even greater necessity of living up to our own history in the eyes of those countries which have regarded us as an example of a nation ruled by its own people. America has always been regarded as the great citadel of free government by those who

fought for deliverance. Many a republic besides our own was fathered here in the United States by patriotic exiles, driven from their own shores because they believed in democracy. A notable example is the Czechoslovak Republic, whose Declaration of Independence from the tight rule of the Hapsburgs was announced by the venerated Thomas G. Masaryk in Washington. Here, in a house on New York's East Side, another rebel against Hapsburg rule, Garibaldi, found employment and sympathy when he was mobilizing the moral forces for a Free Italy. Here, Simon Bolivar and the Cuban liberator, Gomez, received support and strength when the new world was breaking the bonds of the feudal absolutism which bound it to decadent and waning empires. We have encouraged rebels against every royalty, warriors against every despotism—except those who would struggle against the infantile despotism of our own stepchild, Liberia.

In 1913, the Krus rose for the fourth time against the government at Monrovia. But we gave drastic treatment to the symptoms of unrest instead of trying to correct unrest by insisting upon a new charter of liberties for the common man of Liberia. Instead of demanding that the Liberian government end the revolt by mending its ways, we sent gunboats and arms

to help the then president, Daniel E. Howard, crush the Krus. Realizing that a puppet becomes a giant if the puppet is given instruments of destruction, the Krus retreated sullenly and resentfully into the bush.

But they have not forgotten—because the Krus never forget. And that long memory of the Krus brings up the whole question of our relation during this time of crisis to that skeptical world of the colonies and semicolonies. I am selfishly interested in the preservation of my own country when I say that America can make no further steps toward complete democracy unless it takes the Krus, the Bassas, and all other submerged peoples into its evaluations of democracy. For all of us remember, too well, what happened when Britain, fighting for its life, was confronted with the stubborn, immovable memories of the Burmese and Malayans.

Germany, at present, is faced with complete military disaster in Africa. But the Nazis are strategists in more than one policy. In line with the typical policy of the Brown House, we can expect an intensified campaign of propaganda among the African tribes—a campaign designed to foster internal revolt and widespread sabotage on the part of the native populations as the Allied forces move into the jungles. That

campaign will exploit every grievance of the natives, and magnify it a thousandfold. It will hold out every form of specious reward as an inducement to hamper and harass the Allies.

We can take one of two courses: we can hang and beat hundreds of natives who have listened to Axis propaganda, we can burn their pitiable crops and confiscate their scrubby herds. Brutal treatment has always been the way of imperialism whatever the flag carried by its armies—and brutal treatment has always been the way of the Liberian government. But the medicine has lost its potency in this, the drawing twilight of imperialism. If we administer doses of floggings and hangings, we will be faced with a whole continent in revolt and an extension of the war even beyond the years of our children.

I would rather hear the drums of Africa beat out the march of peoples, fighting with the United Nations for things long withheld, than to hear them beating out the heavy crescendoes of a Holy War against us who had shown the physical, but not the moral strength of our convictions. We need the help of Africa's manpower and of Africa's resources if we are to win a permanent peace from this Second World War. Knowing Africa, I can say that we will have

neither on an effective scale unless we begin to put democracy into immediate practice on that whole continent.

We can make a start in Liberia, the African nation over which we possess the greatest influence. Whatever program that we undertake there need not, of course, detract from the idea of a united West African republic embracing Liberia. But if the West African republic should fail to materialize, then we would still not be relieved from the responsibility toward insuring democracy for the masses of that country which copied, only to distort, the political forms of the United States.

Six months from the time that this book is being brought to an end, Liberia will go through another solemn travesty of democracy. President Barclay's "crown prince," Supreme Court Justice W. V. S. Tubman will probably be chosen to succeed his mentor in the usual machine-rigged national elections. If Tubman should, in the meanwhile, fall from grace, some other satellite of Barclay's will be picked to preside over the destinies of this republic which needs the strong hand of an aggressive, socially minded administrator in this period when Africa is racked with war and threats of revolt.

Within the next six months, democratic America should take positive steps to lay the initial basis for democracy in Liberia. It should demand emphatically that the property qualifications be abolished as a basis for voting. This might require some amendments to the country's constitution. But then constitutions were made to serve men, and not men to serve constitutions. For so long as Liberia's Presidents are chosen by a strongly established and supremely selfish minority, there is no chance of electing any man who would willingly take steps to change the country's economic and social structure. Monrovia beat its collective breast and protested to the League of Nations that it had reformed, when Edwin Barclay became Liberia's chief executive following the simultaneous resignations of President Charles Dunbar King and Vice President Allen L. Yancey in 1931. The retirement of these two slave traders—Liberia's delegate to the League swore—meant that slavery as such had been abolished in his country.

Actually, the democratic nations were hoodwinked at that time by something that was no more and no less than a "palace revolution." Edwin Barclay, as I have pointed out in an earlier chapter, had been Secretary of State under the infamous King. Edwin Bar-

clay's uncle, Arthur Barclay, was one of the most powerful machine politicians in the country, having himself served as President from 1904 to 1912.

Twelve years after the palace revolution, the Barclay regime cannot say truthfully that it has abolished slavery. Its supporters cannot point to one substantial reform which would justify its continuance in office. The resources still lie fallow; the people still rot in ignorance and disease. There is only one field in which the present administration can point to any substantial accomplishments—collecting taxes through intimidation of native chiefs. The quasi-official *Handbook of Liberia* has this to say on the subject:

“One of the most significant factors that have contributed to this healthy state of the country today is the understanding policy President Barclay has followed in respect to Native administration. He has frequently toured the whole of the interior of the Republic, consulting and advising with the Chiefs and people, and this has resulted in a spirit of eager coöperation on the part of these tribes in the broader program of the Government. Having understood the benefits of coöperation, *the hut taxes, which are collected by the Chiefs themselves, have doubled and trebled.* This is the surest evidence that peace and understanding



have been reached, and that unity of vision for the future well-being of the whole country exists."

What this sorry little book does not say is that "the broader program of the government" is simply another name for collecting all that the traffic will bear. Moreover, tribes are quite likely to show "a spirit of eager coöperation" if failure to pay up means the destruction of their villages. Nor does the book admit what is known to every man in Liberia—that President Barclay no more dares walk down the streets of Monrovia or into a country village unescorted than does Pierre Laval in Paris.

Men cannot respect their governments, if they have no share in the selection of those who make their laws and those who enforce them. If more people must be given the opportunity to vote in Liberia's presidential elections, then the national legislature must also be a greater cross-section of the country's peoples than the tiny bicameral assembly which now meets at stated intervals in Monrovia.

Liberia's legislative body consists of ten senators and twenty-one representatives. All of them are required by the constitution to be property owners; all of them are elected from the Americo-Liberian controlled belt of the five counties and of the single terri-

tory of Marshall. The three provinces of the hinterland have no representation, nor is there any provision made for elected spokesmen of the twenty-eight native tribes.

America can take a long step toward winning the confidence of those tribes in this crucial war by insisting that they be allowed to choose representatives who shall have votes and voices in the legislature. There is certainly no excuse for a procedure which deprives a man like Paramount Chief Barclay (no relation to the President) of the Vai tribe from having a chance to serve his people in the lawmaking body. Chief Barclay, educated in Europe, a man with a far broader culture than his namesake, the President, must suffer all the scheming exactions of the government upon native leaders; he is powerless to take any steps in their behalf because he remembers that our nation helped Monrovia put down the Krus in 1913. But if he had a seat in the legislature, he could sponsor worth-while bills, knowing that he was backed not only by his own tribesmen, but by the consciousness of the whole awakened world.

All of this may sound like too much intervention by our nation in another's affairs, but is any country now

a self-sufficient entity, privileged to carry on any policies that may seem fit to its rulers—whatever the consequences be to the rest of mankind? Cain, to his sorrow, asked the scornfully negative question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Paul was to answer it in the affirmative, centuries later, when he declared that, “We are all members, one of another.” No man in this modern world is allowed to burn his own house because such an act may conceivably destroy his neighbors’ homes as well. And any country today that tries to destroy the foundations on which its citizens live is ultimately weakening the whole community.

That is the moral and political aspect of the Liberian scene. But moral repentance and political adjustments, however well-meant, cannot long guarantee the security of a nation unless its peoples have some greater freedom than liberty to wear rags. It is useless for us to insist upon a new morality and a new politics in Liberia, if we do not take steps to establish a new economy as well.

Before the elections six months hence, America might well sponsor a commission of indefinite duration to help Liberia in its economic and social development. That commission should not be the usual body of senatorial globe-trotters who will spend our

money and get no results. It should be made up of liberal whites and Negroes from this country, who would make an unbiased and intelligent survey of Liberia's needs. That commission could also be the body which would advise and assist Liberia in the transition from a feudal despotism to an enlightened state, whether Liberia continued as a sovereign republic or as a division of a new West African Union.

A broad-scale program of public works should be inaugurated under the direction of the commission—a program which would envision the construction of roads, schools, hospitals, and other projects long delayed but badly needed in that country. This might require acquisition, through condemnation, of much land now held by the Americo-Liberian aristocracy. But such a policy would also hasten land reform, breaking up the feudal estates which are the fortresses of the clique. The law of historical necessity does not suspend its operations for the benefit of any given individual—particularly when historical necessity coincides with the necessity of a people as a whole.

The commission should take immediate steps to develop Liberia's latent resources through the limited-lease system to foreign corporations which we have already outlined, and also through the development

of native coöperatives. The money to finance this needed reconstruction could be acquired through several sources: through justifiably increased taxes upon the Firestone Company, through strict supervision over monies collected by the government, and through the sale of now untapped raw materials to older nations.

Now, of course, in conjunction with this development, the whole conception of citizenship based upon race plus class must be changed. Just as the new Liberia would have to admit the people of the twenty-eight tribes as full members of the national community, so it would have to abolish its absurd restrictions against citizenship for white men. We are done with racism in any part of the globe. We are done with discriminations against black men in Alabama and against white men in Liberia. Let us admit that Liberia may have barred whites from citizenship because whites had seized the black countries around her and expropriated their resources. Let us also admit that our forms of discrimination against Negroes in certain parts of the South are one reason why we ourselves run afoul of discrimination in places like Liberia.

No race and no country may safely carry over the

mental patterns of the past into the future. Germany is losing in the world struggle not only because she has been outgeneraled, but also because the concept of universal equality is superior in terms of the cosmos to the degraded Nazi gospel of the *Herrenvolk*. Liberia will fade into the oblivion of other petty states that lived and died briefly in other epochs, if she persists in maintaining her Americo-Liberian handful as an African *Herrenvolk*.

The great Negro educator, Booker T. Washington, had a profound message for Liberia—and for us who should help redeem Liberia through honest coöperation—when he said:

“The black man who cannot let love and sympathy go out to the white man is but half free. The white man who retards his own development by opposing a black man is but half free.”

Let us all, black and white, stop being half free. Let us have a mutual love and sympathy—and I say this, conscious of the fact that I have said things in this book which seem harsh and uncharitable toward individuals whom I have mentioned.

But let me say this in conclusion: I despise no man as an individual for his opinions. In the privacy of their homes and in the circle of their friends, Edwin

Barclay and Harvey Firestone, Jr., have the right to express any sort of an opinion that they please. I am outside of those circles, and have no desire to censor their minds. But because I am outside of those circles—one of the people who can be hurt if socially harmful ideas find expression—I must protest what Messrs. Barclay and Firestone do. I must look forward, as do Collins, Brown, Boatswain, Chief Arku, and Small Sam, to the day when we may put progressive thoughts into actions that will benefit us as they benefit our peoples.

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The tropical rain came down in torrents as I stood in the shelter of the operations building awaiting the plane that would carry me back to America. I felt very lonely that morning when I was about to leave my friends—for Africa and its peoples had truly become a part of me. Then I looked back for a moment toward the plantation.

Approaching from the south, I saw an enormous group of natives. As they drew closer, I recognized my friend, Boatswain, followed by Collins, Brown, and some three hundred of my former laborers. When they were within a few feet of me, they stopped.

Boatswain came forward and said:

"Boss, today you leave on the great airplane and de hearts of de people go with you. Dey be sad to see their best friend go back to his country. So, the people put their tupence' on their trupence and buy some gold which dey give to the goldsmith and dey have a fine ring made for you to wear. You must never take dis ring off, for if you do, de hearts of my people, who are your people, will be sad past anything. So Bosso, with much love past anything, I give you dis ring."

Boatswain's face was wet from the rain as he handed me the ring I wear and cherish. He held his head high and I saw his eyes were red and wet—not from the rain.

As I climbed into the passageway of the giant transport plane, I turned to look at the people who had served me with so much love and devotion. . . . This is their book . . . As I hope it is their cry for deliverance. . . .





